

Enlightened Understanding

Sunday, December 3, 2023

Rev. Diana Johnson, with Lucinda Alton, RScP,
& Chris Johnson, RScP



A Beloved Community
Practicing the Possible Through Prayer

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 – 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, grounding us in the here and now...allowing every out breath ...to be an offering of Peace. In the Silence, breathing in Presence, breathing out Peace...(Pause)

We share this time of reflection...making time for Communion, opening ourselves to the Voice of Spirit...giving ourselves this most precious gift of time...(Pause)

Together, we feel and express our gratitude for our connection with all of Life. We envision a web of consciousness...an Infinite Intelligence...a Holy Presence...that connects us...that surrounds, contains, and infuses the planet and all that share Life here. Presence is all that is...Divine Light, expressing as all of Creation. And so we know ourselves to be sparks of Divinity...perfect expressions of the One Source. Every human...every creature...the plants and the soil that give them Life...all shining with the Light of Spirit...the rocks and minerals...water and wind...all that lies below and the forever nature of what we know as above... All of Life is aglow with One Radiant Light. We sense, feel, and know that we are connected to All That Is...

As a human family, 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 ***Wake Up to the Light*** and this morning, we'll be spending time in contemplation of ***Enlightened Understanding***.

Throughout the world's spiritual traditions, we find Enlightenment, or waking up to the Light of Spirit, as a common theme. It is one of the *Common Threads of Truth* that weaves us together spiritually. December is a month filled with Celebrations of Light.

Today is the first Sunday of the Season of Advent, the day we light the Faith candle, acknowledging and celebrating the importance of Faith in reaching a more ***Enlightened Understanding***. In the Christian Church, Advent marks the four weeks leading up to the birth of Jesus of Nazareth, the long-awaited Messiah. A more Universal interpretation is offered by Richard Rohr: "(Advent) is a time to focus our expectations and anticipation of 'the adult Christ, the Cosmic Christ', who challenges us to empty ourselves, to lose ourselves, to surrender." Only from a place of surrender...even submission...can we open ourselves fully to ***Enlightened Understanding***.

How easy it is to sleepwalk through our lives, to move from one experience to another on autopilot, with little awareness of Spirit's Presence. We might have moments of awareness during morning meditation and prayer or in giving thanks before a meal...in attending a class or spiritual circle during the week. But often, our Spiritual Life feels disconnected from our everyday existence.

Advent offers a time to wake up...to consciously step into a state of awareness and attentiveness so that we don't miss the workings of the Divine in our daily lives. Advent reminds us that the ordinary things are not to be taken for granted; rather, they are to be held as Sacred...as acts of Grace...as expressions of the Christ Light moving through our lives.

And so, we begin this Season of Advent, in deep Faith that as we let go of all we think we know, making room for what is yet to come, we create space for Guidance and Insight...we invite Wisdom and a more ***Enlightened Understanding***.

Our Jewish brothers and sisters begin their celebration of Hanukkah this Thursday at Sundown. They celebrate for eight days to commemorate the miracle that occurred after the reclaiming of their temple from the Greeks. It is told that a small amount of lamp oil, enough for one day, lasted for eight days...until more could be procured. Today we display the Menorah to honor this rich ancient tradition...for we know that it is simply one more way to celebrate the Light of Spirit.

We have yet another example in the life of Siddhartha Gautama, who ultimately spent 49 days sitting under the Bodhi Tree, seeking to understand the root of all suffering. Finally, he experienced ***Enlightened Understanding***...he came to know that desire, when misunderstood and mis-handled, and ignorance, formed the basis for our suffering.

He determined that the solution was not to withdraw from the world, but rather to live a practical life of compassion in the world...to be of service. This coming Friday the Buddhist tradition celebrates Bodhi Day, the day that Siddartha Gautama became Gautama Buddha. We honor the coming of the Light.

Chris – Guided Meditation

The first Week of Advent invites us to contemplate *Hope* and *Faith*... *Hope* may be defined as a desire for a certain outcome... a yearning for a blessing yet to come... *Hope* affirms the *possibility* that our desire will be realized... but it stops short of a firm expectation of fulfillment... we are simply not sure...

Faith implies a greater optimism... expectation... a deeper trust or confidence in the fulfillment of our desire... In the Christian Scripture, the author of the Epistle to the Hebrews wrote, “Faith is the *substance* of things hoped for...”ⁱ *Faith* gives our desire a structure that allows it to come into our experience... “Thy faith hath made thee whole...”ⁱⁱ

Hope contains a seed of *Faith*... and it holds a seed of doubt... We can grow our *Hope* into *Faith* through optimism... by feeding and nurturing the seedling of *Faith* with our attention and intention... and by weeding out doubt... We use our will to stay focused on our desired outcome... and then we follow Spirit’s guidance...

Faith needs to be exercised, like a muscle... And, like beginning a workout routine, we start with easier things... *Hopes* we are already optimistic about... We pray, confident in its answer... and with answered prayer, our *Faith* becomes stronger... and we gently stretch it toward bigger dreams...

As we share these three minutes of Silent Meditation, I invite you to think of a *Hope* that you feel pretty confident will come true... expect its fulfillment... imagine yourself witnessing the manifestation of your desire... If doubts arise, release them, and focus only on your intention... How does it *feel* to celebrate your dream coming true?... Sense the gratitude welling up within you as you watch your desire unfold... Know that every fulfilled desire grows and strengthens your *Faith*...

Silence – 3:00

We give thanks for this time in Sacred Communion with our Creator and with our Beloved Community... for the strengthening of our Faith... Grateful for our prayers that have been answered in the affirmative... and grateful also for the times when the answer was no... Thank you, God, for everyone and for everything...

Our *Faith* grows each time our prayer is answered... whether the answer is yes, or no... A “no” answer simply means that our *Faith* was misplaced... or that what we were seeking was not the highest good for ourselves and everyone else... Roadblocks are most often there for our own safety...

Returning now to the wisdom and inspiration of Rev. Diana's Taizé message, we listen with open hearts and our strong *Faith*, knowing that we continue to grow our *Faith, Hope, Love, and Enlightened Understanding*...

Rev. Diana – The ancient Sarum Prayer offers a simple but elegant way of inviting Grace in the form of greater understanding. The prayer says, “God be in my head, and in my understanding.” This is a bold ask...let me know what is Real, what is True, from a higher perspective. Are we prepared for such an understanding?

Understanding starts with humility – knowing that we don't know something and desiring to know it better. It requires curiosity, which implies attentiveness, alertness, and openness to whatever it is that is not yet known.. To ask God for understanding is to ask for the view from a different vantage point than our own...to be willing to think outside whatever box our head may be in.

God be in my head, and in my Understanding...this is not actually a request or a plea. It is a command. Many times in the Christian Scriptures when Jesus invites his followers to ask, the original verb and tense in the Aramaic is closer to making a demand. Ask...know that God, the Universe, or Great Spirit wants Good for you. Ask...in deep faith that Wholeness is your Divine Birthright.

“Now faith is the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen.” (Hebrews 11:1) No matter the appearance in your life or in the world, “Trust in the Lord with all your heart, and do not rely on your own insight. In all your ways acknowledge him, and he will make straight your paths.” (Proverbs 3:5-6)

Divine Mind is present at all times and in all circumstances. Take this time to listen deeply for God's Wisdom and Guidance. Rev. Lesley Miller invites us to “Have faith in the flow of Infinite Life that you are, and find it deep within your soul.”

Closing Prayer – I would like to close our Taizé with the prayer that our Prayer Practitioners are sitting with this month, on behalf of all who have reached out. I offer it to you, as well. Please know with me...

There is ever and always *One Life*, forever giving of Itself as all of Creation.

I Am a perfect and intentional expression of that One Life.

In this Holy Moment, I look past all appearances to what I know to be True. I know for myself, as I know for each one who reaches out for prayer, that the nature of Life is Goodness...Wholeness. All life forms have the inherent capacity for healing. Setting aside my human perceptions, I sense the Presence of God at work. I allow the Power, Intelligence, and Grace of God to move freely through the lives of each one.

Bodies are Healed...minds and hearts are Peaceful...relationships are Graceful and Loving. Wholeness prevails.

Every being finds right livelihood and is supported abundantly...Thriving prevails.

Each one knows Balance between activity and rest, and is blessed with activities that nurture the soul and feed the spirit. Harmony prevails.

In deep faith that all are Guided and Guarded by the Divine Hand, I trust in Divine Order, Timing, and Wisdom. I release any and all doubt, knowing that by whatever apparent outcome, all is unfolding Perfectly for the Good of All. Everything that unfolds from this moment forward *IS* answered prayer. I take a moment now to feel the Power and Presence.

Deeply grateful, I release...I let it be. So be it. Amen!

Musical Meditation – *Christ in Me, Christ in You*, by Gary Lynn Floyd

Rev. Diana – 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.

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– *Ordinary Days*, by JJ Heller

<https://youtu.be/5AFHZDdTw24>

Rev. Diana – Blessing for the Offering

Rev. Diana & Chris – 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 – 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**...setting aside any traces of doubt and giving yourself and the world this gift of Powerful Vision.

We're creating a world where all humans embody 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 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...

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.

With gratitude for 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 cannot, *will* not, lower our Vision, no matter the appearances in the world, because we know that such a world is not only possible, but it is *inevitable*. We align our actions to support our Vision...we celebrate each change as it comes...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...Ashay...Aho!

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 reach out to.

If you were with us at Taizé this morning, you know that our topic of Conversation this month is ***Waking Up to the Light***. At this morning's Gathering, we contemplated the idea of building a more ***Enlightened Understanding***. We spent some time acknowledging some of the Celebrations of Light that happen in December.

What Holy-Days did we honor this morning?

And for those who weren't here, remind us of the significance of that day or season.

I'd like to share a brief story with you from the Buddhist Tradition. You may have heard it before. A young monk enters the Temple to sit at the feet of his Teacher. He is very excited and has so much to share about all the things he has learned. He is very studious and has gained a lot of knowledge. So he goes on and on, telling the Master about all the things he knows. As he is talking, the Teacher begins to pour a cup of tea. When the cup is full, he keeps on pouring...and pouring and pouring. Finally after quite a lot of tea has hit the table, and then the floor, the young monk notices and says, "Master, stop pouring. The cup is overflowing." The teacher says, "Yes..."

What is the lesson in this story? (Like the full tea cup, when we are so full of what we already think we know, there is no room for anything new.)

And why do I tell you this story when our topic is Enlightened Understanding? (We said in Taizé that Enlightened Understanding requires humility. We have to know that there is something we don't know, and we must have the desire to know it better. It requires openness to change. And it requires Faith.)

Faith in what? (Faith in the idea that whatever I wish to have revealed is already available and can be known; Faith that it will come by my getting quiet, asking, and listening.)

Who in this room has Faith?

Would you believe me if I told you that everyone in this room has an equal amount of Faith?

What do I mean by that? (We all have 100% Faith, all the Faith we're ever going to get. The difference between my Faith and yours, your Faith and your next-door neighbor's, is what you place your Faith in.)

What do you have Faith in? Do you live by that Faith?

If we aren't living by that Faith, is it really Faith?

The Faith Candle is lit this morning for the first Sunday of Advent. Traditionally, the Christian Church refers to this as the Hope Candle and speaks of rekindling Hope. This feels a little bit wishy washy to me. Hope is better than hopelessness, don't get me wrong. But Hope leaves an escape hatch...it lets me off the hook. I think Hope must be closely related to *try*. My Guru Yoda says: "Do or do not; there is no try." Hoping and trying might offer a starting point for my spiritual journey, but it is not the place I want to set up camp. Hope tends to waver...it depends on circumstances. Faith is different.

How is Faith different than Hope? (Faith looks past appearances to the Spiritual Truth at all times. It is steadfast. It requires a conscious choice. It takes conviction.)

What is conviction? (From the Latin, its roots mean overcome and with conquering. There is power and determination behind conviction.)

As I am talking to people, I hear the idea that it is hard to have faith when so many doubts cloud the mind, as if doubt is the opposite of faith.

What if doubt isn't the opposite of Faith, but part of the process of Faith? What do I mean by that? (Maybe Faith is a way of moving ourselves through the questions and uncertainty and into a place where we can plant our feet and stand in Faith.)

What a great conversation! I think it's probably time to wrap up, so please join me in prayer.

Closing Prayer

Let's keep it simple...join me in knowing that...

There is ever and always *One Life*, forever giving of Itself as all of Creation.

I Am a perfect and intentional expression of that One Life.

In this Holy Moment, I look past all appearances to what I know to be True. I know for myself, as I know for each one listening, that the nature of Life is Goodness...Wholeness. All life forms have the inherent capacity for healing. Setting aside my human perceptions, I sense the Presence of God at work. I allow the Power, Intelligence, and Grace of God to move freely through my life. And as I do, I am assured...there is nowhere to go, nothing to achieve. I have all that I will ever need, already within and around me. I have Faith in the flow of Infinite Life that I Am and All is well.

I Am Guided and Guarded by the Divine Hand, I trust in Divine Order, Timing, and Wisdom. I release any and all doubt, knowing that by whatever apparent outcome, all is unfolding Perfectly for the Good of All. Everything that unfolds from this moment forward *IS* answered prayer. I take a moment now to feel the Power and Presence. (Pause)

This is my Enlightened Understanding.

Deeply grateful, I release...I let it be. And so it is. Amen!

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.


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

Offertory Video – *The Christmas Can-Can*, by Straight No Chaser


<https://youtu.be/7E-47VmFopE>


Lucinda – Blessing for the Offering

Lucinda – Invitations


 Our 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.


 **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.

 **Plan to join us next Sunday for the welcoming of new Prayer Practitioner Chris Netto**, and the Re-Commitment Ceremony for our existing Prayer Practitioners. Celebration to follow!


 **12 Days of Kindness** is drawing to a close for 2023! Please bring in your hats, instant coffee packets, toothbrushes, and tiny toothpaste. Also, homemade treats are welcome. We'll be putting together the Gift Bags next Sunday!

Looking Ahead...

 **Saturday, December 16th, 1-4 pm - April Jiménez WinterSky** will be leading a ***Medicine Wheel Workshop***. Snacks will be provided. Suggested Donation: \$20 – RSVP requested.

 Wednesday, December 20th, 6:30 - 8:00 pm, join us to *Share the Light*. This will be Mystic Heart's Candle Lighting Service for 2023. We will take an Interfaith Taizé-Style Journey of Music, Meditation, and Prayer. RSVP is requested – contact revdiana@mysticheart.org.

Plan ahead, save the date...

 The Mystic Heart Book Club, Fast Track to Wellness, and Metaphysical Bible Study will be taking a break from December 18th thru' January 8th.

There is lots more information about the December and January events and activities in your Bulletin and on our website.

Prayer Requests: Lucinda is (I am) 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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ⁱ Hebrews 11:1

ⁱⁱ Matthew 9:22; Mark 10:52; Luke 7:50, & 8:48