

Endings as Beginnings

December 31, 2023



An Independent Interfaith Community
Practicing the Possible Through Prayer

Lucinda Alton, RScP, with Sherri Dotter, RScP

Taizé

Call to Awareness – 3 Bells

Sherri – Opening Prayer

Lucinda – Welcome...if you're new with us here this morning, my name is Lucinda Alton, and I am a Prayer Practitioner here at 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.

Taizé Chants

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

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

Lucinda – Just a quick note before I start, there are note pads on the seats for you to answer a couple of questions that I will ask you later.

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 ***Endings as Beginnings***.

There are some concepts that seem to be completely opposite. But if we look closer, we see that they are actually unbreakably attached to one another – opposite sides of the same coin, to use a phrase that has been around for a long time. Beginnings and endings are that. Endings can be seen as openings for new opportunities, new adventures to come into our lives. A classic example would be you graduate from school and suddenly you have a host of new beginnings to choose from. Are you going to get a job, continue to a higher level of education or, will some other opportunity be there? One thing to keep in mind is that the gift in an ending isn't always something that you see right away.

But, what about an ending that is a little bit more complicated. Think for a moment about something that you have worked hard for. You have a goal. You know that you are on the right path because everything seems to be falling into place. And then suddenly, you came up against a closed door that feels like an impossibly large roadblock, and everything changes in a moment. It can be hard in that moment to pause and begin to look for new choices. It would be so easy to get stuck in a feeling like, "but I was so sure that that was the path I was supposed to be following. What happened?"

Sometimes we can be so sure that we're on the right path that we don't notice any of the signs that we we're a little off course. As my new favorite poet, Billy Chapata says, "When something isn't for you or when things don't align, sometimes your angels will send you a reality check that disrupts you in your path or slows you down so your soul can finally breathe." In other words, God gives us the opportunity for a course correction.

So now we have an opportunity to really take a look at where we are and where we want to go next. As Joseph Campbell tells us "We must be willing to get rid of the life we've planned, so as to have the life that is waiting for us. The old skin has to be shed before the new one can come." Sometimes we have to be willing to let go of our thoughts and beliefs regarding what our lives are supposed to look like and be willing to embrace a different path.

And sometimes, we need to be willing to take a step forward. New beginnings mean traveling down a different path even if the new direction looks similar to what you were planning. And that can be pretty scary looking. For some of us, it means being willing to let ourselves be uncomfortable for a while and continue stepping forward. It means to stop trying to control the outcome and know that God has this and knows the best outcome. It takes faith and a willingness to allow ourselves to be guided in a new destination.

Sherri – Guided Meditation


Remembering my personal life this last week, I can relate to what Lucinda referred to as experiencing different sides of the same coin. At the beginning of the week, I felt so blessed to have had quality time with many friends and family. On Christmas Eve, I had over-committed to both friends and family and ended up going to the lights at Turtle Bay twice in one night! On Christmas, we went to my Mom and stepdad's and shared a beautiful meal filled with family and our new extended families. There was so much love and so much Life.


The next day, I got word that my step-Grandpa had two heart attacks. I went to the hospital to find that he transitioned right before I arrived. Our family comforted one another in our grief. There was so much love and also Death. Two sides of the same coin in a very short time.

But Life returns, and by Friday, we celebrated my husband John's 50th Birthday with friends and family. Why am I sharing all this? Because this is what is happening all the time. It is typically over a longer period and unfolding so slowly that we sometimes don't recognize it. Although this week was at times overwhelming, I feel the insight I gave me was a Divine blessing. I know for me that sometimes, I am so unaware of the blessing of this life experience that I wish it away. My thoughts sound something like "if I could just get through this day" OR "when I get this done, my life will be better" OR "when this changes, I'll be happier".

As we prepare to move into the silence, I am going to quote my husband (the gospel of John) from his Birthday party. I'm paraphrasing of course. "What's most important in life is the relationships we share, and I am so grateful for my friends and family that are here to celebrate with me today."

During our meditation, if you are willing, contemplate the following questions:

 "What would I like people to stand up and say about me on my next Birthday?"

 "What would I like people to stand up and say about me at my funeral or Celebration of Life?"

Silence – 3:00

In profound gratitude for this insight, we allow the music to usher our attention back to this time and this place... We are grateful for Divine Guidance that reminds us of what is really important.

Life is two sides of the same coin. The sameness is the Love that always exists. The two sides are how love shows up. Spirit, as Love, is always pointing us towards love, towards Itself, in a multiplicity of variations of Itself, whether that be people or events or anything really because it is always happening. Life, as Spirit, is always unfolding for our good. Sometimes I cannot see how this is true, but I do have faith that it IS true.

As Lucinda continues her Taizé message this morning, we open our hearts and minds to Divine Wisdom and Inspiration... and as we go through our week, we listen for the Still Small Voice to remind us to see: "Endings as Beginnings".

Lucinda – I want to take a moment here to ask you to contemplate a couple of questions. 1. What qualities are you willing to let go of as 2023 comes to an end. (Anger, fear...)

2. What qualities are you willing to embrace more deeply in the coming year?

I am going to end with these words from Janet Rebhan "In this new year, may you have a deep understanding of your true value and worth, an absolute faith in your unlimited potential, peace of mind in the midst of uncertainty, the confidence to let go when you need to, acceptance to replace your resistance, gratitude to open your heart, the strength to meet your challenges, great love to replace your fear, forgiveness and compassion for those who offend you, clear sight to see your best and true path, hope to dispel obscurity, the conviction to make your dreams come true, meaningful and rewarding synchronicities, dear friends who truly know and love you, a childlike trust in the benevolence of the universe, the humility to remain teachable, the wisdom to fully embrace your life exactly as it is, the understanding that every soul has its own course to follow, the discernment to recognize your own unique inner voice of truth, and the courage to learn to be still."

Closing Prayer – I would like to end with this Native American prayer

Mother Earth Prayer

Mother Earth hear your child, As I sit here on your lap of grass, I listen to the echoes of your voice In my brother, the Wind, As he blows from all corners and directions. The soft and gentle raindrops are the Tears you cry for your children.

Teach me the Lessons you offer: To nurture my children, as you nurture yours, To learn the Lessons of the Four Kingdoms, that make up this World of Physical Things, and To Learn to Walk the Path chosen so long ago.

Mother Earth, hear your child, Be a bond between the Worlds of Earth and Spirit. Let the Winds echo the Knowledge of the Grandfathers.

Who await, unseen, yet visible if I only turn my eyes to their World.

Let me hear their Voices, in the Winds that Blow to the East.

From the East: I seek the Lessons of Childhood: To see with the trusting innocence of a small one, The Lessons of Spirit, Given in Love by our Creator.

From the South: to Learn the Ways of Questioning: The Fire and Independence of adolescence, The Truths, and how they help us Grow along this Path.

From the West: where the Grandfathers teach us Acceptance of Responsibility That come during the years of Marriage and Family.

That my own children grow Strong, and True.

From the North: where the Elders, who by their long lives Have learned and stored Wisdom and Knowledge. And Learned to Walk in Balance and Harmony with our Mother, the Earth.

Mother Earth, hear your child. Hold my hand as I Walk my Path in this World. Guide me to the Lessons I seek, bring me closer to Our Creator, Until I return to the Western Direction, to once again Enter the World of Spirit, Where the Sacred Fire Awaits, and I rejoin the Council of the Elders, In the Presence of the One Who-Created-All.

— Kiiskeen'tum- She Who Remembers

Musical Meditation – Song: *Get Ready, My Soul*, by Daniel Nahmod

<https://youtu.be/vUrRtf3rVmg>

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 you.

Lucinda – 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 – See *You Again*, by One Voice Children's Choir

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zXdWWHjx4c>

Lucinda – Blessing for the Offering/ Closing Song (Soul's Blessing)

Sherri – Opening Prayer

Lucinda – Good morning and welcome, or welcome back...welcome to those joining online. If you're new with us here this morning... my name is Lucinda Alton, and I am a Prayer Practitioner here at 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.

Conscious Conversation

Opening Music



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

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

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 **Endings as Beginnings**. And I would like to share again my favorite quote from this morning: "As Joseph Campbell tells us "We must be willing to get rid of the life we've planned, so as to have the life that is waiting for us. The old skin has to be shed before the new one can come."

Sometimes we have to be willing to let go of our thoughts and beliefs regarding what our lives are supposed to look like and be willing to embrace a different path.”

As we get ready to enter a New Year, I would like to share a quote from a movie I saw a few years ago. One of the characters said, “This is not the end. This is not the beginning. This is the end of the beginning.” I like this quote because there are some many different times that it could cover. Like New Year’s eve and New Year’s day. Because one year feeds into the next year. We like to see each year as a new slate, but really it is a new slate only if we choose to see it as a new slate.

So I would like for us to take some time to contemplate this time.

Three questions to start out with.

What are you the most grateful for in 2023?

What qualities would you love to leave in 2023 Can be for yourself or yourself and others? Anger, hunger, stress, etc.

What would you like to bring more of into 2024? Peace, love, service

I have been getting into Rick Hanson. And I would like to share one of his writings. It’s called “Drop the Stone”

So, what do I mean by "drop the stone?"

Most of us are lugging around at least one thing that is a needless burden. Such as holding on to resentments, worrying over and over about the same thing, or trying to make someone love you who won’t. It’s like a load on your back, a weight in your hands, that you really don’t have to carry each day.

Perhaps it’s an unrealistic standard you keep failing to meet, an old quarrel you keep rehashing, or something addictive you can’t do in moderation, so you’re always thinking about it. Or maybe it’s an old shame, disappointment, or loss. Or perhaps a chronic tension in your body or armor around your heart. Or a rigid belief or righteous indignation.

I’m not suggesting we turn away from pain, stop caring about others, or avoid ambitious goals. It’s healthy to allow sadness, hurt, or worry to flow through your mind, and good to keep faith with yourself, bet on yourself, and dream big dreams.

But it’s stressful and harmful to get sucked into repetitive preoccupations, to keep looping multiple times around the same track. I heard that the great Tibetan teacher, Tsoknye Rinpoche, had once said essentially: "Thinking the same thought again is OK – but ten is enough!"

In your brain, negative preoccupations tend to engage the "default mode network" centered in the back half of the midline cortex. As this network evolved over millions of years, our ancestors used it as a simulator in which they could review past actions and imagine future possibilities, and thus learn from their mistakes and make good plans.

But when the simulator uses *you*, it's more like a "ruminator" in which you are trapped, feeling bad, and reinforcing negative neural circuits. Instead, it's OK to step out of the movie inside and OK to drop the load.

The Practice: Is much more in depth that I want to go to day, so I will leave a copy on your seats. This is from his series of email "Just One Thing..."

But for our purposes, what stones have you been carrying around this year?

What stones would you be happy to put down?

I WILL HAVE A SECOND READING, JUST IN CASE

Closing Prayer

Let's keep it simple

Please let my words speak for you.

Good Morning, God,

Right here in this one precious moment that you have made, I pause. I thank you for the many blessings I have received in 2023 and I stand in complete faith that you have my back for 2024.

I thank you for the presence of Mystic Heart and my family here. For the support of Mystic Heart and our service to the community that we are a part of. And I am deeply grateful for the continued support of Mystic Heart through the year as we look forward to moving into our new, larger home. I am so deeply grateful that we continue to grow and evolve into our next yet to be a Spiritual force in the world.

I am deeply grateful for the support of each one of our church family this year from hauling food to the mission to cleaning to cooking to all of the many ways that our family quietly supported each other.

I know that despite appearance, peace is growing stronger each day in the hearts of all and I accept that with deep joy.

For these and all of the many blessings that we receive regularly, I say thank you, Father Mother God, 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 – Please enjoy Thankful, by Verses

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=oQ8AQRznByk>

Sherri – Blessing for the Offering

Sherri – 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.

Looking Ahead to January

♥ 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 Brisolaro 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: I am available for prayer after service

Information Cards if new people

Closing Song

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

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