

This Great Turning

January 28, 2024

Chris Johnson, RScP, with Rev. Diana Johnson, IM, RScM, & musician Gary French



An Independent Interfaith Community
Practicing the Possible Through Prayer

Taizé

Chris – We allow the sounding of the bell to carry us inward...

Call to Awareness – 3 Bells


Rev. Diana – Opening Prayer

Chris – Good morning, I am Chris Johnson, Prayer Practitioner here at Mystic Heart Spiritual Center, and I would like to welcome you home... To our Spiritual Home, and home to your own Mystic Heart – where Divine Wisdom dwells within you.

Let's begin our Taizé experience with musical prayer as we chant together.

Rev. Diana, Gary, and Chris – Taizé Chants

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

 **In My Awakening**, written by Karl Anthony

Chris – This month we are using the breath to sense our connection with all that is. I invite us to breathe in, feeling the coolness at the tip of the nostrils... following the breath as it moves up and through the mind, down the throat, into the chest... letting it pause, expanding the heart... and then allowing it to move through the heart and sending Love into the world as we exhale... Again, inhale... pause... expand... feel the Love... and send it out into the world.

Remembering that the breath connects us to our fellow humans, and to all other creatures... we share the same life-giving air... The breath connects us to the plants... we inhale the oxygen they give off, and we exhale the carbon dioxide that they need for photosynthesis... and the cycle continues. Breath is Life... Life is breath.

There are no barriers... there is nothing to separate us from Life. Each of us is a Life in process... every creature, plant, rock, and grain of sand... every drop of water... all that exists, no matter how large or small is an intricate and irreplaceable part of the One Life, all dancing together in this cosmic mystery. Take a moment to breathe in that sense of connection... breathing in, I receive the Life that connects all beings, all things, all of Creation. Breathing out, I give back to Life.

As human expressions, we are given the ability to make choices, and so our responsibility is to make them wisely... to care for our brothers and sisters, human and

otherwise... to care for the Sacred Mother Earth as she gives of her nourishment... to make an honorable and noble contribution to Life Itself, doing no harm, and aiding in the transformation happening in our world. We are experiencing a **Silent Awakening**, and by our conscious participation, we are moving *with* the Divine Flow of Life.

Our Taizé meditation this morning calls us to acknowledge *This Great Turning*... this in-between time in which we live. Humanity is experiencing a paradigm shift... the demise of a way of being that no longer sustains humanity, other beings, nor the planet we inhabit. The story we inherited about *the way things are* simply doesn't work any longer. That story is winding down... but the new story that will replace it has not yet been written.

What will that story be? Who will be its authors? That remains to be seen... but consider this: the new story will not be created mentally – it won't just be thought up or written down – it will come about through *action*.

Dan Millman tells a tale in which he is walking with a forest sage... They come to a fork in the path, and stop... The Sage asks him, "Are you going to choose which way to go?" He answers, "I *have* chosen." She replies, "No, you *haven't*." The Law of Choice teaches us that if we don't *act* on our decision, we haven't really decided... It is only when we commit to our choice by *acting on it* that we set a new cause into motion... and that cause has Creative Power.

So, what choices shall we make? What actions will we take? How will we create the Love-Soaked World we affirm every week? It won't happen by *revolution* – by tearing down the old systems and structures that support greed, poverty, and racism. Revolution always leads to more of the same – a new face, perhaps, but no substantive change.

True and lasting change can only come through *evolution*. We must allow ourselves to be transformed, both in our consciousness and our behavior. There is no need to dismantle the old story – it is already collapsing under the weight of its unsustainability. Instead, we are being called to *hospice* the death of the old paradigm compassionately, while *midwifing* the birth of a new way of interacting with one another and with our planet. We must *live* our way into our vision.

Like Siddhartha Gautama, we are called to leave the "palace" of our comfort zones and embrace the suffering in our world before we can become the Buddha. Like the Galilean Rabbi Yeshua, we are called to feed the hungry, heal the sick, welcome the alienated, and comfort the afflicted, before the Christ can be born within us. Like the Druidic priests of old, we acknowledge that our Mother Earth herSelf is the conscious, intelligent, living Being that gave us birth, and sustains our lives.

These great teachers – and many others – have shown us the way of transformation... that if we would change the world, we must begin by changing ourselves. The evolution of humanity happens one mind, one heart, one person at a time.

Rev. Diana – Guided Meditation

In ***This Great Turning***...in this time of great change...we are called not only to transform, but to transmute ourselves, our lives, and our world. To *transform* means to make a thorough and dramatic change in the *form* or *appearance* of something; to *transmute* points to changing the very *essence* or *nature* of a thing.

We are being Called to change what it means to be human. We are being Called to modify our *essence*, our very *nature*, so that transformation in our world can occur. This realization can seem daunting, causing us to shy away. After all, what can we do as individuals that will make such a change? And yet, it is only we, as conscious, choice-making beings that can make these intentional changes.

We are being called to take a lens to every area of our lives, and to ask, “What must I change in myself, in my life, to make a positive contribution during ***This Great Turning***...how might I walk as Peace, as Compassion, in my relationships? How can I live as Wholeness in my day-to-day experience?”

Trusting that Wisdom dwells within each of us, let us take our three minutes of shared silence to ask for Divine Guidance...what is mine to do?

Silence – 3 minutes

Bell

The Human Heart never lies, for it is infused with Spirit’s Wisdom. As we shift out of the thinking brain and into the feeling heart, our answers are always known. For this we are most grateful. In our gratitude, as appreciation for Divine Guidance, we move from contemplation to action. In so doing, we move our world towards Peace and Wholeness.

Chris – Lao Tzu taught us that the "A journey of a thousand miles begins with a single step." Similarly, This Great Turning will be made up of many, many small turnings. Millions of individual choices, prayers, acts of kindness, and lifestyle changes, each nudge us a little closer to our goal: a world in which all of Creation lives in harmony with one other and with our Beloved Mother Earth.

Rabbi Yeshua called this the Realm of Heaven... Sir Thomas More called it Utopia... Muslims call it Paradise... Rev. Diana calls it a Love-Soaked World. Whatever name we use, let us continue to hold its grand image in our minds while making sure we don’t fail to notice the little victories along the way. Our vision may be so large that we overlook our incremental progress toward it. It is important to see, acknowledge, and celebrate these successes. Giving thanks for the small things brings us more to be grateful for.

To conclude our Taizé gathering this morning, I’d like to share this ***Prayer for the Great Turning***, from **Joanne Sunshower**:

May the turning of the Earth save us.

May the turning of the seasons and the turning of the leaves save us.

May we be saved by the worms, the beetles and the microbes turning the soil.

May we be saved by the turning of vegetation into compost and the turning of compost into rich soil.

May the turning of seeds into plants and the turning of flowers into fruits save us.

May the grasses and weeds, the vines and mosses all conspire to save us.

May we be saved by the turning of sprouts into saplings, of saplings into trees, and the trees into forests.

May the scurrying, foraging, pouncing, and lumbering of the animals save us.

May the breath of heaven in the breezes and the stormy winds save us.

May the dance of the butterflies, and the musical flight and return of the birds save us.

May we be saved by vapors turning into clouds and by the turning of the ever-changing clouds into rain.

May the waters flowing from springs into the lakes save us.

May the streams flowing into rivers, the rivers into seas, and the great heaving of the oceans save us.

May we be saved by the patient turning of the rocks, the hills, the mountains, and the volcanoes.

May the metabolism of the climates of the Earth save us.

May the turnings of all Beings great and small move us to find wisdom in our own turnings.

May we be saved by our waking and sleeping, by the rhythms of our blood and our appetites, by the cycles of birthing and nurturing, injury, and healing, mating, and nesting, loss and discovery, joy, and mourning.

May we find in time the grace to turn to one another, and may this turning also become our salvation.

May we learn to benefit the life of Earth with peace, humble in our needs, and generous in our giving.

May we learn to celebrate the abundance of life with gratitude, and to embrace the Earth with our bodies in return. Amen

Returning our awareness to this moment, to this place, we open our eyes, our hearts, and our minds. Look around at who is here supporting your spiritual growth this morning. This is Beloved Community; this is Spiritual Family... one of your support

systems. These are some of the people who share your journey with you in mutual support – and sometimes celebrate your birthday with you!

Offering – At this time we offer the opportunity for you to share of 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 or our mailing address, if you prefer to write a check, at mysticheart.org. And we thank you in advance for your gifts.

Rev. Diana, Gary, and Chris – Offertory Music

 ***Beautiful Things***, written by Lisa & Michael Gungor

Chris – Blessing for the Offering

Rev. Diana, Gary, and Chris – Taizé Closing Song

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


Conscious Conversation

Rev. Diana – Opening Prayer

Chris – Good morning, and welcome back! For those just joining us for the first time, my name is Chris Johnson, and I am a Prayer Practitioner here at Mystic Heart. We are an Independent Interfaith Community that teaches Universal Principles and Practical Spirituality. We welcome you home to our Gathering Place and to the Guidance and Wisdom of your own Mystic Heart.

I invite you to join us in our opening songs – the words are on the screen. Feel free to stand up, dance, or do whatever gets the Spirit moving in you!

Rev. Diana, Gary, and Chris – Opening Music

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

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

 ***The Silent Awakening***, written by Tina Malia

Chris – As we close out the first month of a new year together, I invite you to renew your commitment to the creation of a ***Love-Soaked World***. Engaging the body, allowing Spirit's Presence to be felt, let's breathe in Peace... allowing it to move down into the heart... and release it as Love... as Self-Givingness.

Know with me now that we are creating a world where all humans embody and live from the Qualities of Spirit... Love, Kindness, Generosity, and Compassion... from this way of being, there is a deep sense of Joy, Contentment, Sufficiency. All people honor and care for one another, for all of the life forms that share this beautiful earth, and for the earth Herself.

We realize that we are connected to all of Life... that we are dependent on the planet to sustain us, and on one another. Being generous by our very nature, and living a life true to that nature, we give of ourselves freely, offering the gifts we came here to give.

With all needs met for every person, each one is free to share time and talent in ways that feed the soul.

Life on earth is a story... a story that we are helping to write by our every thought, word, and action. Together, we envision a story 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... where all find Purpose.

We welcome this new way of living, valuing every being for its uniqueness... we practice living Authentic lives... Integrity comes naturally as there is no need to protect or be defensive. With Love, Generosity and Kindness guiding every human heart, our world is free of hatred and violence. We recognize the abundance that surrounds us, and gratefully receive all that is needed to live physically, mentally, emotionally, and spiritually fulfilling lives.

All beings thrive like never before as we learn to see the sacred in everyone and everything... 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. Each of us works 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 being born. In this process of profound change, this Beloved Community stands as an open and welcoming place for all who seek support, belonging, Spiritual Family.

By the power of our deep faith, this prayer is acted upon, answered even before it is spoken, as Spirit knows our heart's desire and intent. In full expectation of its Graceful unfolding... we release it to the Creative Power and Intelligence that I call God... to the One that gets it done... And so it is... Amen! Sathu... Selah... Ashay... Aho!

Bringing our awareness back to the body, to the room, to the amazing beings who share this space with us this morning... take a look around to say good morning to your Spiritual Family if you haven't already.

Our theme for January has been ***The Silent Awakening***, and we end the month exploring our roles in ***This Great Turning***. In the Taizé portion of our Gathering, we acknowledged that we are between stories – the old story of separation no longer serves us. We cannot continue to live as if we were separate from each other, separate from nature, and separate from Spirit. As Chief Seattle once said, “Humankind has not woven the web of life. We are but one thread within it. Whatever we do to the web, we do to ourselves. All things are bound together.”

So the question is, how do we “reconnect?” And how do we rewrite the story of humankind – along with our eight billion co-authors? If you've ever collaborated on a project with another person, you know how challenging the give and take can be. So, let's start small and work our way up.

What are some challenges you have encountered while working with others?

(wanting it *my* way; difficulty reaching consensus; not being able to clearly communicate ideas to another person)

What strategies have you found successful in collaboration? (generous listening; radical openness; surrendering *my will* to what is best for the project)

So how might these strategies show up when the whole world is our partner?

(the Law of Unity; *Thy will be done* – what is best for all beings? look for the good; celebrate the wins)

The Law of Choice teaches us that our choices are made only when we act on them.

What does this tell us about how we will create the story that will govern the new paradigm? (we *live* into our vision; we align our actions with it; we *be the change*)

According to eco-philosopher Joanna Macy, there are three dimensions to the Great Turning: slowing down the damage being done to the planet; creating sustainable structures and systems, and a shifting planetary consciousness. Let's look at these one at a time:

If we're not the ones mowing down the rainforests or evicting people, what can we do to slow down the damage being done to the environment and to humanity? (stop participating in unsustainable activities: recycle, compost, grow our own food; take care of people left behind by society: food ministries, clothing, blankets)

What can we do on a micro level to help create new structures and systems that are sustainable? (check the social- and eco-responsibility of companies we buy from & stop supporting irresponsible ones; get involved locally in food banks, micro-shelter projects, community gardens)

How about shifting planetary consciousness? That sounds like a tall order! (start with ourselves; live mindfully – are we living sustainably? are we regenerating our resources? are we teaching by example?)

Closing Prayer

I would like to close our gathering today with this 1887 prayer from the Lakota Chief Yellow Lark:

Oh, Great Spirit, whose voice I hear in the wind,

Whose breath gives life to all the world.

Hear me; I need your strength and wisdom.

Let me walk in beauty, and make my eyes ever behold the red and purple sunset.

Make my hands respect the things you have made and my ears sharp to hear your voice

Make me wise so that I may understand the things you have taught my people.

Help me to remain calm and strong in the face of all that comes towards me.

Let me learn the lessons you have hidden in every leaf and rock.

Help me seek pure thoughts and act with the intention of helping others.

Help me find compassion without empathy overwhelming me.

I seek strength, not to be greater than my brother, but to fight my greatest enemy -
Myself.

Make me always ready to come to you with clean hands and straight eyes.

So when life fades as the fading sunset, my spirit may come to you without shame.

Aho


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 plan for our growth. You can find more information on our website.


Rev. Diana, Gary, and Chris – Offertory Music

 ***We Shall Be Known***, written by Karisha Longaker of Ma Muse


Rev. Diana – Blessing for the Offering

Invitations


 **Michael's Book Club** meets on Tuesdays from 3 – 5 pm. They are reading *The Delight of Being Ordinary* by Roland Merullo.


 **Fast Track to Wellness** meets on Thursdays from 12:00 – 2:00 pm. This powerful and supportive group is growing...come check it out.


 **Metaphysical Bible Study** meets on Thursdays from 3-5 pm with Chris Johnson.

 **Soul Speak: A Day of Prayerful Creativity with Rev. Diana, This Saturday, February 3rd, 10 am – 3 pm with Lunch Provided.** We will be using a variety of artistic media to give voice to what might otherwise go unheard and unseen. What does your soul have to tell you? What might it say through color and design that it cannot express in any other way? There's only one way to find out. Contact Rev. Diana to reserve your seat. Suggested donation: \$25

Looking Ahead...

 The **Master Gardener Spring Workshop** at **Shasta College, Saturday, February 10th from 9:30 am – 12:00 noon**. Join Rev. Diana as she and other Shasta County Master Gardeners facilitate a morning of workshops designed to prepare you for your spring planting. The group will meet in the 4000 building of the Shasta College Farm. More information is coming soon.

 **New Certificated Class: *Common Threads***, with me. This is a 15-week survey of the different Faith Paths that have evolved on the Earth, beginning Wednesday, February 28th. The book is ***Understanding World Religions***, by Irving Hexham, and the **suggested donation is \$140 for the full course, or \$10 per class session**.

 And great news...we have reserved a new spot for our **Spring Retreat**. We are collecting your **\$100 non-refundable deposit to hold your space**. We would appreciate deposits as soon as possible, as we have had to pay in advance. The **total cost per person is \$275, with the balance due by May 1**. We have a maximum number of 25 sleeping spaces, and there is room for 2-3 RV's to park, depending on size.

Prayer Requests, Practitioner available after service, Information Cards if new people

Rev. Diana, Gary, and Chris – Closing Song

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

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