

Becoming Myself

Sunday, May 12, 2024

Rev. Diana Johnson, IM, RScM, with Lucinda Alton, RScP,
Chris Johnson, RScP, & musician Dalton Fitzgerald



An Independent Interfaith Community
Practicing the Possible Through Prayer

Taizé

Rev. Diana – we follow the bell to the stillness within...3 Bells

Lucinda – Opening Prayer

Rev. Diana – Welcome, and Happy Mother's Day...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. We open our doors in welcome, trusting that you will be led to the Guidance and Wisdom of your own Mystic Heart.

Dalton – Taizé Chants

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

 **Let Love Be the Guide**, written by Dennis Bryan, Kalyani, Diana & Chris Johnson

Rev. Diana – Grounded in a deep sense of gratitude for the many gifts of this day, let's settle into a moment of stillness...taking a couple of slow, deep breaths...letting go of all that has come before this moment...finding the still point within...relaxing the body...allowing your awareness to move to the breath...resting there, giving yourself the gift of Presence...feeling contentment with what is in this moment...feeling the Peace that is always available.

We take a moment to experience our Oneness with all of Life...to honor our connection with our global family...

Envision with me a web of consciousness that surrounds and infuses the planet...a radiant, shimmering web...some call It Infinite Presence... God... the Field... and each of us is a Divine Spark within that One Light...every human, every creature, every plant...the rocks and minerals, water and wind, stars and planets...expressions of Spirit's Infinite Nature...each one unique, but absolutely necessary to the whole...and connected to everyone and everything else.

We grow in compassion, empathy, and understanding as we acknowledge that we are all of One Essence, One Substance, One Source, and that what we offer into the world affects us all. With hearts and minds centered in Spirit, our collective prayer and

meditation leave an imprint of Peace, of Love, on human evolution, and on the world, for all time. Take a moment to experience the Grace we are sending out...

This month, our contemplations are centered in what it means to create **Beloved Community**, and this morning's reflections point us in the direction of **Becoming Myself**...an important idea when seeking to be part of a healthy community. What does it mean to become myself?

When each of us was born into this incarnation, we brought with us specific traits and tendencies...particular ways of being that are inherent. And over the course of time, our natural ways are either encouraged or discouraged by family members, friends, teachers, society, and other influences. We are social beings...without love and attention as infants, we die. Without the care of others and a sense of belonging, we cannot thrive.

Early in our lives, it is our primary caregivers who have the most influence. Later, our teachers become influential. During our teens and into young adulthood, our friends have a huge effect on how we see ourselves. And from childhood on, society surrounds us with clear messages of who we are supposed to be.

As we move through our lives, we may find ourselves masking who we are...changing our outward expression so that we might be accepted...approved of...loved. Layer after layer, we mold ourselves to the preferences of others. Then one day, we look in the mirror and wonder, "Who am I, really? How did I get here? And how do I find my way back to myself?"

If you are sitting in a place like this, inviting reflection, you most likely see this life as a spiritual journey. And on the spiritual path, we are often encouraged to do our work. We might read books, take classes, or meet in groups with like-minded people. We may take up a meditation practice or spend time in prayer. Maybe Sacred Service or Conscious Giving become part of our Practice. And all of these bring growth. We know that this is true.

We must be careful that in all of our *doings*, we maintain a connection with our *being*. As we make our way along the *upward spiral* of evolution, becoming more conscious of our world and how we move *through* it, we are called to simultaneously follow the inward spiral, becoming more self-aware... more conscious of who we came here to be. It becomes our work to remove the masks, layer by layer, until finally we are fully exposed...authentic. We plumb the depths of our shadow places, bringing them into the light of day, so that we can integrate all of who we are into one Whole person.

Some of what we find in the shadows is hard to face, but awareness breeds healing. And some of what we find surprises us in powerful and beautiful ways. The gifts we uncover can be talents, interests, or capacities that were driven underground years ago, and are finally being unearthed to be offered to the world. We find self-awareness, self-acceptance, self-love. We are surrendered to what is, to who we are. This is **Becoming Myself**.

Author and teacher, Parker J Palmer, offers his insight. He says,

It is a strange gift, this birthright gift of self. Accepting it turns out to be even more demanding than attempting to become someone else. I have sometimes responded to that demand by ignoring the gift, or hiding it, or fleeing from it, or squandering it—and I think I am not alone. There is a Hasidic tale that reveals, with amazing brevity, both the universal tendency to want to be someone else and the ultimate importance of becoming oneself:

Rabbi Zusya, when he was an old man, said, In the coming world, they will not ask me: ‘Why were you not Moses?’ They will ask me: ‘Why were you not Zusya?’

We are disabused of original giftedness in the first half of our lives. Then—if we are awake, aware, and able to admit our loss—we spend the second half trying to recover and reclaim the gift we once possessed.

Chris – Guided Meditation

In 1957 some monks in Thailand were moving their monastery... As they were moving a giant clay statue of the Buddha, one of the monks noticed a large crack in the clay... Inspecting it with a flashlight, he saw a sparkling reflection... The monks worked together to carefully widen the crack to find the source of the glow...

They found that the statue was made, not of clay, but of pure gold... Two hundred years earlier, when the Burmese army invaded Thailand, monks had covered the statue with plaster... They hoped to conceal its value so that it would not be plundered in the raid... None of the monks survived the attack... and the secret of the Golden Buddha was lost for years...

As vulnerable children, we unconsciously learn what is expected of us... by parents... teachers... our peers... society... We protect ourselves by hiding aspects of our being that might not be accepted... we sacrifice our uniqueness attempting to fit in... and, once again, the secret of the Golden Buddha that we are is lost...

Robert Browning wrote, “There is an inmost center in us all, where truth abides in fullness... and, to know, rather consists in opening out a way whence the imprisoned splendor may escape, than in effecting entry for a light supposed to be without.” We must widen the crack, so that our Inner Light may illumine the world...

In Beloved Community, we remember what is true about ourself and each other... the priceless treasure within each of us... though perhaps covered by a protective layer... This frees us to risk vulnerability... As we share our three minutes of silent contemplation this morning, let us seek to remember our original self... Who we were before we went into hiding?... What soul qualities have I hidden from myself and the world?... Chip away at the clay until the Golden Buddha within you shines through...

Silence – 3:00

Great Spirit, Divine Creator of all that is seen and of all that is unseen, we thank you for this holy time of self-inquiry... for this communion of saints, as your Beloved Community gathers together to court your Presence... Thank you for your inspiration and revelation... May we never forget who and Whose we are...

Each of us comes into this life endowed with a unique array of gifts and skills... talents we are meant to share with the world... When we hide our light under a bushel, we do not cheat only ourselves... we limit Spirit's ability to move Creation forward into its next yet-to-be...

We open our hearts and souls now in deep receptivity, as Rev. Diana continues to share *her* Divine Gifts of inspiration and empowerment... knowing that the more I *open out a way for the imprisoned splendor*, the more I am *Becoming MySelf*...

Rev. Diana

Eckhart Tolle once wrote that we, as humans, think we have to “add things to our baskets” so that we might become complete. In Truth, there is nothing we need to add. We are perfect, whole, and complete from birth. Everything we need is already given. Rather than *addition*, ***Becoming Myself*** is a process of *subtraction*. One layer at a time, I let go of all that does not serve...thought and behavior patterns, worn-out belief systems, attitudes, self-doubt, unworthiness, playing small...And little by little, I remember who I came here to be.

Parker J. Palmer asks...

“When we lose track of true self, how can we pick up the trail? One way is to seek clues in stories from our younger years, years when we lived closer to our birthright gifts.”

What did you love as a child? What games were your favorites? How did you spend your free time?

What did you dream of being when you grew up?

We can also look at our adult lives for clues. What jobs have you had that you loved, and which ones have you not enjoyed?

How do you spend your free time now?

What makes time stand still?

What brings you joy?

Howard Thurman once wrote:

There is something in every one of you that waits and listens for the sound of the genuine in yourself. It is the only true guide you will ever have. And if you cannot hear it, you will all of your life spend your days on the ends of strings that somebody else pulls.

I invite you to take some time with the process of peeling away the layers...digging in the shadows...sitting with these questions...listening for what your shy soul is trying to tell you...and being real with the answers you receive and what they can mean for your life...for your happiness.

Again from Howard Thurman: "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."

And then bring that aliveness...that authentic you...into Community, so that your gifts can be shared. And remember, as you give, so do you receive.

Let's anchor these Truths in prayer. Know this as True for you, as I speak it for myself.

There is ever and always One Life, forever expressing Itself, so that it might know Itself as all that is...

I Am an intentional and irreplaceable expression of Divinity...

Spirit's desire is to know Itself as me...It has entered human experience as me at my birth...It experiences Itself as my becoming...

This is how Spirit loves.

This is how Spirit creates...by becoming.

I Am here on purpose. There are no accidents and no mistakes in God.

I was given everything I will ever need to live my life as me...authentically...passionately...joyfully.

Right here and now, I release all that does not serve my purpose.

One layer at a time, I peel back the layers and reveal the Truth of my Being.

I allow myself to boldly stand in who I Am, in who I am meant to be, whatever the world may think.

It is none of my business what the world thinks...it my business to **Become Myself**, so that I can get on with the work of sharing my gifts.

Until I do, the world is missing out, and my life is incomplete.

I need not worry about my next step...the Christ within knows the way.

And so I listen, and follow Its Guidance.

I Am so grateful for this safe and supportive space...this loving community.

Thank you, Spirit, for New Beginnings...for the Graceful and Easy move into our next Spiritual Home.

I know that we are blessed and prospered in the years to come.

Thank You for this day, and for Blessings too numerous to name...those gifts that reflect my preferences, and those that challenge me to grow in character, resilience, faith, and love.

I walk in reverence and gratitude for all that I witness, for the gift of Life Itself. I Am surrendered to Your Powerful Presence and Guidance. Resting in my deep faith and knowing that my prayer is answered before it is spoken. I let it be. And So It Is! Amen!

Dalton – Musical Meditation

 ***Christ in Me, Christ in You***, written 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.

Rev. Diana – 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 in the world. If you're joining us online, you can find a Donate Button and our mailing address at mysticheart.org. We thank you in advance for your gifts. And we call to mind the words of Helen Keller...life is either a daring adventure, or nothing.

Dalton – Offertory Music

The Adventure, written by Gary Lynn Floyd

Rev. Diana – Blessing for the Offering

Feel free to grab a cup of something warm next door and meet us back at 10:30 for a Conscious Conversation. We'll bless you on your way with

Dalton – Closing Song

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

Conscious Conversation

Opening Prayer – Lucinda


Rev. Diana – Good morning and welcome, or welcome back...and welcome to those joining online. Happy Mother's Day! Whether you are a mom, or have a mom, or choose to celebrate the Divine Feminine in all beings, or the Blessed Mother that sustains us, enjoy this beautiful day.

If you're new with us here this morning... my name is Rev. Diana Johnson, and I am the Pastor here at Mystic Heart. We are an Independent Interfaith Community that teaches Universal Principles and Practical Spirituality. We open our doors in welcome, trusting that you will be led to the Guidance and Wisdom of your own Mystic Heart.

Dalton – Opening Music

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

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

 **Wholly Holy Way**, written by Rickie Byars

Rev. Diana – Let's take a creative journey...calling upon the full power of both mind and heart...engaging the body...to join in the creation of a **Love-Soaked World**.

Feel with me now, a world where all people, everywhere on earth, are living from their Highest Potential...expressing Love, Kindness, Generosity, and Compassion...Peace...Cooperation.

In this new world, all people honor and care for one another, for all of the life forms that share this beautiful planet with us, and for the Mother Herself.

We *remember* that we are connected to all of Life...that we are dependent on the planet to sustain us, and on one another.

By our every thought, word, and action, we're creating a world in which all beings are well-fed...have the safety and comfort of home and a deep sense of purpose and belonging. We are so grateful that health, education, and healthy relationships are supported by social systems grounded in Integrity, Compassion and Wholeness.

Every being is valued for its uniqueness...we practice living Authentic lives where vulnerability is celebrated...there is no need to defend or protect. The work we are doing within ourselves shows up as a world free of hatred and violence.

We recognize the abundance that surrounds us...giving and receiving flow freely in every direction and all beings gratefully receive all that is needed to live physically, mentally, emotionally, and spiritually fulfilling lives.

The planet and its beings thrive like never before as we learn to see the sacred in everyone and everything...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 align our actions with our Vision, living these changes first in our own lives, with our families, friends, and neighbors...and one neighborhood, one community at a time, a new world is being born. In this process of profound change, this Community stands as an open and welcoming place for all who seek support, belonging, 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!

Bringing awareness back to the body, to the room, to this beautiful life, and to the amazing beings who share this space with us this morning...look around to say good morning to your Spiritual Family.

Our theme this month is ***Beloved Community***, and the topic of Conversation this morning is ***Becoming Myself***. This morning during Taizé, we talked about how we start out in this lifetime, perfectly connected to our True Self...expressing authentically. And over time, with the influence of others, and because of our need for acceptance and love, we begin to mold ourselves...to mask ourselves to gain approval. Somewhere in adulthood, we begin to wonder who we are and how we got here. This is often the time when the 'self-help' journey begins. We engage in all manner of self-improvement techniques. We use Spiritual Practices to help expand our awareness and compassion. And these are all positive steps along the journey of Becoming Ourselves.

But we have to be careful not to get lost in all the doing. **Why?** (always more, it's never enough)

We contemplated the idea that as we proceed along the upward spiral toward greater awareness, there is a simultaneous journey waiting to happen...the inward spiral...the process of peeling back the layers that have grown to cover who we truly are. We spent time contemplating some simple but helpful questions that can help to lead us back to ourselves. Now we pivot, using that background as a springboard for our Conversation.

Go ahead and finish this sentence: "Every day, and in every way, _____."
(I'm getting better and better.)

Has this been your experience?

What would be closer to the Truth?

(I'm up and down and all around; I follow the thread of True Self for a while, and then I find myself back in the dark...struggling with what felt easy just yesterday.)

Anyone else have that experience, or is it just me?

So the journey to becoming myself is a switchback at best.

Today, I'm going to invite us into a little bit different process. It will still be a conversation, but I'm going to begin by reading you A Taoist Tale. Then our questions will revolve around the story. You'll find copies of the story in the backs of the chairs if you'd like to read along. The story is called *The Woodcarver*.

Khing, the master carver, made a bell stand of precious wood. When it was finished, all who saw it were astounded. They said it must be the work of spirits. The Prince of Lu said to the master carver: 'What is your secret?'

Khing replied: 'I am only a workman: I have no secret. There is only this: When I began to think about the work you commanded, I guarded my spirit, did not expend it on trifles that were not to the point. I fasted in order to set my heart at rest.'

'After three days fasting, I had forgotten gain and success. After five days I had forgotten praise or criticism. After seven days I had forgotten my body with all its limbs.'

'By this time, all thought of your Highness and of the court had faded away. All that might distract me from the work had vanished. I was collected in the single thought of the bell stand.'

Then I went to the forest to see the trees in their own natural state. When the right tree appeared before my eyes, the bell stand also appeared in it, clearly, beyond doubt. All I had to do was to put forth my hand and begin.'

'If I had not met this particular tree there would have been no bell stand at all.'

'What happened? My own collected thought encountered the hidden potential in the wood; From this live encounter came the work which you ascribe to the spirits.'

What is this story about for you?

How does it intersect with your life at this moment?

Is there a word, a phrase, or an image here that speaks directly to your condition?

(Diana – like Khing, my role as a Pastoral Care Minister requires that I pay attention to externals...this facility, the finances, keeping supplies stocked, leading activities, and attending to the needs, and listening to the hearts of the community members. And like Khing, I make a Practice of going inward on a regular basis, so that I can listen for Guidance and bring that Vision back into Community. It can be demanding, even stressful sometimes. Where Khing answers to the Prince, I answer to each of you, and to my Core Council and Practitioners. And like Khing, I often have to take what feels like commands and turn them into choices.

Something I have noticed...Sometimes life's commands evoke something from me that I didn't know I had. Let me share an example: when I became a parent, I was over-the-top filled with Joy. And yet, I didn't anticipate the extent to which my life would be under command for many years to come.

Does anyone have another example of how life's commands brought more forward than you knew you had within you?

Are there any other responses that want to come forward about this story?

Our responses to "The Woodcarver" say more about us, than about the text. Our responses say more about us than about the text.

With this in mind, what do your responses tell you about what might be alive within you? What do your responses tell you about you?

Please notice...nowhere in the text does it say that the Prince gave Khing seven days off to fast and forget.

Did anyone jump to the assumption that Khing took seven days off?

It simply says that Khing went through a process that took seven days. The story also doesn't say that Khing left hearth and home to go into solitude. "He may well have done his fasting and forgetting amidst his family, workplace, and civic responsibilities. Whether you find yourself drawn to or repelled by, (or simply disinterested...this is stupid!)...or someone else's interpretation of it, simply take note of your response and reflect on it. Ask yourself what personal issues you may be projecting. Try to understand your own responses, and you may discover that your inner teacher has something to say."

(Process and quotations taken from *A Hidden Wholeness* by Parker J. Palmer)

Thank you for exploring this process with me. It is yet another tool for peeling back the layers to see what lurks inside.

Last week, we began a review of our Community Agreements. We talked about the first two in depth. Here's a refresher:

- 1. We agree to always be respectful, compassionate, loving, honest, and authentic in our thoughts, words, actions, and communications, speaking our needs clearly. In doing so, we create a safe, loving, and supportive environment in which complete transparency is the norm, vulnerability is honored, and where people are free to evolve physically, psychologically, emotionally, and spiritually.***

 **And...**

- 2. We agree to take personal responsibility for our thoughts, words, and actions at all times. In doing so, we create a loving environment where spiritually mature individuals promote peace, joy, and celebration in all that we do.***

The next two agreements are a bit simpler. They are:

- 3. We agree to reverently seek Spirit's Guidance, going directly to parties involved and seeking the help of a Minister if needed, when resolving conflict. In doing so, we trust that Love is leading the way, and that Peace prevails.***

And...

- 4. We agree that we are consciously choosing to create a Spiritual Family. In doing so, we are creating a space in which to belong, a place to call Home.***

What do these agreements mean to you?

These are challenging agreements to live up to sometimes. We don't always get it right the first time. But our commitment to creating The Beloved Community and a chosen spiritual family demands that we get up when we fall...talk things through...and have

faith that if things are not the way I would prefer, they will right themselves soon enough, whether by coming into alignment with what I wanted and thought was correct, or by proving me mistaken and working out better than I could have imagined.

Let's close in prayer, knowing the Truth for each one of us.

Closing Prayer

Take a moment to allow your awareness to return to your body, to this space, to this beautiful gathering...welcome back.

Love Offering

I 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.







We're going to share a couple of songs this morning, just because we're here and we can...

Dalton – Offertory Music

 *There's a Healing Going On, written by Jami Lula*

Lucinda – Blessing for the Offering

Rev. Diana – Invitations

-  The Mystic Heart Book Club is meeting on Tuesdays from 3-5 pm with Michael Bordeaux and Chris Netto. We are reading Conversations With God, Book 1...an amazing book.
-  Please consider joining us on Wednesday for our first work session on the new building. Gather at 1:00pm in the new location to help with one of the following: (people with muscles and dollies) moving cabinets; washing down cabinets/walls in preparation for painting; painting cabinets. All supplies will be present. We'll crank some tunes. Stay as long as you can/want to. Wear your grubbies!
-  Fast Track to Wellness meets with Rev. Diana on Thursdays from noon – 2:00 pm.
-  Please consider joining us after the Wellness Circle this Thursday to begin pricing items for our Parking Lot Sale.
-  Metaphysical Bible meets on Thursdays, from 3-5 pm with Chris Johnson.
-  Join us for Community Meditation each Thursday evening in May. Our purpose is to create Connection, positive vibes, and a solid spiritual foundation in preparation to the move to our new location. This week's meditation will be

guided by Jill Matthews, sharing the Thai-style Ball of Light Meditation for Positivity. Suggested donation is \$10 (or more), so that we can share the Love with Jill.

Looking Ahead...

- ♥ Join Sherri and John Dotter on Friday, May 31st, for the next Mystic Heart Fundraiser. They are offering a casual five-course dinner and beer pairing in their home. The cost is \$35 per person. Open to community members only. There are only five tickets left...get them today!
- ♥ We're gearing up for a Fundraising Parking Lot Sale to help fund our remodel and move this summer. Doreen announce.
- ♥ Please join April Jimenez-WinterSky, Saturday, June 22nd from 11am to 1:30pm for part 2 of the Dancing the Wheel Workshop. Suggested donation: \$20
Snacks will be provided.

There is more information available in the May Bulletin...take one home with you. And check out our amazing website.

Information Cards if new people

Prayer Requests: Lucinda is available after service for prayer, or fill out a prayer card and she will get your request to our Prayer Team for daily prayer – We invite everyone to help us make a private space for prayer here in the Sanctuary by joining us next door for lunch

Dalton – Closing Song

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

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