

Welcoming the Soul

Sunday, May 5, 2024

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



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...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.

Rev. Diana & Chris – 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...allowing the breath to dissolve any thoughts or concerns...relaxing the body...allowing your awareness to move into the heart space...allowing yourself to rest 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 empower our human expression of Good in the world as we acknowledge our connection with all that is...we grow in compassion 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 stayed on Spirit, our

collective prayer and meditation leave an imprint of Peace, of Love, of Grace, on human evolution, and on the world, for all time.

This morning's contemplations revolve around the idea of creating **Beloved Community**...a group of individuals, each one seeking a greater understanding of the self, a deeper connection with others, and a closer relationship with the All-That-Is, by whatever name we call it...Individuals who share a desire to grow in spiritual awareness, and to take that awareness into the world, serving as examples of Love and Compassion. A **Beloved Community** welcomes all people...it supports, promotes, and celebrates the growth of individuals in body, mind, and spirit. It offers a safe and sacred space for people to be themselves...to support one another...to make mistakes...to begin again. In **Beloved Community**, we find the opportunity to become more accepting of our differences...more skillful and loving in our communication...and more grounded in who we came here to be. In Beloved Community, we work with others to co-create a safe space...a circle of trust...a place where the soul feels welcome.

The flow of Taizé this morning invites us to reflect on **Welcoming the Soul**. I begin with a question from Parker J. Palmer in his book *A Hidden Wholeness*. "What sort of space gives us the best chance to hear soul truth and follow it?" He suggests that it is "a space defined by principles and practices that honor the soul's nature and needs," and to describe the soul's nature and needs, he uses a metaphor:

The soul is like a wild animal...(it is) tough, resilient, resourceful, savvy, and self-sufficient: it knows how to survive in hard places...yet despite its toughness, the soul is also shy.

Just like a wild animal, it seeks safety in the dense underbrush, especially when other people are around. If we want to see a wild animal, we know that the last thing we should do is go crashing through the woods, yelling for it to come out. But if we will walk quietly into the woods sit patiently at the base of a tree, breathe with the earth, and fade into our surroundings, the wild creature we seek might put in an appearance. We may see it only briefly and only out of the corner of an eye – but the sight is a gift we will always treasure as an end in itself.

Unfortunately, community in our culture too often means a group of people who go crashing through the woods together, scaring the soul away..." Through our teaching, asserting, proclaiming, admonishing, and advising, we drive everything original and wild into hiding. The space we create may invite the intellect, will, and ego to emerge, but not the soul: we scare off all the soulful things like respectful relationships, goodwill, and hope.

"A circle of trust," a **Beloved Community**,

is a group of people who know how to sit quietly 'in the woods' with each other and wait for the shy soul to show up. The relationships in such a group are not pushy but patient;

they are not confrontational but compassionate; they are filled not with expectations and demands but with abiding faith in the reality of the inner teacher and in each person's capacity to learn from it.

By participating in ***Beloved Community***, we co-create a safe space that is ***Welcoming to the Soul***...a place where we find a sense of belonging. Inclusive, loving community is an intrinsic part of the spiritual path. Each spiritual tradition has its own language for this experience. Buddhists refer to the Sangha as the place to truly learn to understand our relatedness...where we live from a place of deep respect and appreciation. In the Buddhist teachings, there is no freedom possible unless we really *get* that interdependence, and we live with the sense of true belonging.

Chris – Guided Meditation

Safe space is an essential component of Beloved Community... it creates Holy Ground within a sacred circle of trust... a sanctuary where we can find healing and peace... and a place of encouragement and support when we are ready to take the risks necessary for the next step in our spiritual evolution...

Safe space does not guarantee us freedom from discomfort or challenges... spiritual development requires a measure of discomfort... The circle of trust is a consecrated and supportive container for transformation... a sacred cocoon in which we are empowered to dissolve our caterpillar self so that we may become a butterfly...

Within the circle of trust, we feel safe to be vulnerable... to be open and authentic... to bare our shy soul... We trust those holding this space for us implicitly... we expect love, compassion, and encouragement from them... and we give that in return... we expect confidentiality... and we give *that* in return...

Spiritual transformation is a glorious, exalted, uncomfortable, and messy path... We rely on our spiritual family to support us through our challenges... and to challenge us when we get too complacent... The people of our Beloved Community are our spiritual dance partners... sometimes we lead... sometimes we follow...

In this Safe and Sacred Space... in this Circle of Trust, I invite you to reflect on your experience of Beloved Community... how you have been supported... how you have uplifted others... And as we share our three minutes of meditative communion, consider what Safe Space means to *you*... What do you need from others to feel safe and empowered to be your truly authentic, undefended Self?... Then contemplate how you might be able to provide that for others...

Silence – 3:00

Divine Creator, thank you for these Holy People – these saints – that I call Spiritual Family... Thank you for the Love and support that I receive from this Circle of Trust... Thank you for the courage and inspiration you give us to grow and evolve together... May we never forget who and Whose we are...

We know and accept that we are one with Spirit... one with each other as individualized divine expressions of the One Life... if I mistreat you, I harm myself... As I support you, I am supported... Thank you all for accompanying me on this journey...

As Rev. Diana continues her Taizé message this morning, we relax into this Safe Space... open and receptive to her inspired words... embracing all that unfolds... as we *Welcome the Soul* into this *Circle of Trust*...

Rev. Diana – In the book of Romans of the Christian Bible, we find:

Be devoted to one another in love...Honor one another above yourselves...Be joyful in hope, patient in affliction, faithful in prayer. Share with the Lord's people who are in need. Practice hospitality. Bless those who persecute you; bless and do not curse. Rejoice with those who rejoice; mourn with those who mourn. Live in harmony with one another....Do not be proud...Do not be conceited. Be careful to do what is right in the eyes of everyone. If it is possible, as far as it depends on you, live at peace with everyone.

Forming authentic and healthy relationships is an art form. It takes work... authenticity... integrity... empathy... compassion... willingness... requires a degree of emotional intelligence, of control over one's words, facial and body language... a level of self-awareness and self-honesty...and the ability to accept people where they are, without criticism or judgement.

Successful community can only emerge from people who have formed authentic and healthy relationships. Creating such a community requires a compassionate heart and the ability to set and communicate boundaries. It demands that we are both strong and vulnerable. It asks us to practice discernment and listen to Inner Guidance. And it takes a willingness to work through the challenges that inevitably arise without running the other way.

When these pieces are in place, Community provides a safe space for beings to grow and thrive...we are engaging in ***Beloved Community***.

Beloved Community means co-creating a community, and ultimately a world where everyone is respected, where everyone is enabled to thrive, and everyone is able to realize their God-given potential. This is a high bar to set, but I believe it's the only one worth reaching for. It begins with us, here...with how we *are* when we're together, and how we honor one another when we're apart. Beloved Community means that whether I am in your presence or not, I can absolutely trust that my name is safe in your mouth. And you can walk in faith that your name is safe in mine. In such a space, there is a circle of trust that is ***Welcoming to the Soul***.

Pray with me for the Humility, Strength, Courage, Discernment and Wisdom it takes to be in Community.

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

One Essence, One Substance, One Process...

And each of us is an intentional and irreplaceable strand in the weaving of that One Life.

We are the way Spirit comes to know what it is to be human.

We are the hands and feet, hearts, and voices of the Divine.

And here is what I know...we are not here, in this space, together, by accident.

There is something being born in, through and as this Beloved Community...both individually and collectively.

Our thoughts, words and actions, our prayers and visions, our compassionate Hearts of Service in the community, are making a lasting imprint.

We are drawn together by our shared desires...to grow into the best versions of ourselves...to call forth our Divinity as we walk the earth as human beings...to create a Peaceful and Wholesome world.

We are drawn together by our shared struggles, reminding one another that we are not alone, and bringing empathy and support during challenging times.

In this Circle of Trust, we find love and acceptance, just as we are...we find ideas that push us, but not too hard...stretch us, but not too far.

Thank you, Spirit, for this Spiritual Family.

Thank you 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, Spirit, for this day, and for Blessings too numerous to name...those gifts that I would call beautiful and graceful, 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, and for 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!

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 in the world. 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.

As a way of remembering our Vision for a Love-Soaked World, here is a classic song for us this morning.

Offertory Video – *Imagine*, written by John Lennon, performed by Music Travel Love & Friends

<https://youtu.be/T0pF2XBfs0Y>

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

Rev. Diana & Chris – Closing Song

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

Conscious Conversation

Opening Prayer – Sherri

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 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.

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

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

Rev. Diana – Join me in the imaginal realm...calling upon the full power of both mind and heart...engaging the body...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 **Welcoming the Soul**. We talked about what it means to be a Beloved Community...how it involves creating a circle of trust...a safe and sacred space where the soul feels welcome to emerge.

I'd like to share the last couple of paragraphs from the Taizé as a springboard, or maybe a pivot point to move us into a Conscious Conversation. Here's how I wrapped it up:

"Forming authentic and healthy relationships is an art form. It takes work... authenticity... integrity... empathy... compassion... willingness... it requires a degree of emotional intelligence, of control over one's words, facial and body language... a level of self-awareness and self-honesty...and the ability to accept people where they are, without criticism or judgement.

Successful community can only emerge from people who have formed authentic and healthy relationships. Creating such a community requires a compassionate heart and the ability to set and communicate boundaries. It demands that we are both strong and vulnerable. It asks us to practice discernment and listen to Inner Guidance. And it takes a willingness to work through the challenges that inevitably arise without running the other way.

When these pieces are in place, Community provides a safe space for beings to grow and thrive...and we are engaging in ***Beloved Community***.

Beloved Community means co-creating a community, and ultimately a world where everyone is respected, where everyone is enabled to thrive, and everyone is able to realize their God-given potential. This is a high bar to set, but I believe it's the only one worth reaching for. It begins with us, here...with how we *are* when we're together, and how we honor one another when we're apart. ***Beloved Community*** means that whether I am in your presence or not, I can absolutely trust that my name is safe in your mouth. And you can walk in faith that your name is safe in mine. In such a space, there is a circle of trust that is ***Welcoming to the Soul***.

First question: What does that mean...my name is safe in your mouth?

Isn't that a powerful way to think about how we speak about one another when we're not together?

At the beginning of the journey to co-create Mystic Heart as a spiritual community, we spent a lot of time talking about values, integrity, authenticity, and a host of other topics. We gained a lot of insight from talking openly to one another, and from reading and discussing this book, *Creating a Beloved Community*. At the end of about three months, we came up with some shared agreements. We haven't taken a close look at these in quite a while, so I thought we could talk about the first two. Keep in mind that these are our aspirations, and that we sometimes miss the mark.

- 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.***

What does this look like in action?

- 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.***

What are the most important words here? (Personal responsibility)

Let's make a right turn here. I'm reading another book about building community right now. I'd like to share a quote: "To create a more positive and connected future for our communities, we must be willing to trade their problems for their possibilities."

What do you think the author means by that?

There's an aspect of *Creating the Beloved Community* that I didn't talk about during Taizé. Let me share a slightly longer quote:

Read from page 14 of *Creating the Beloved Community* (Jim Lockard)

What jumps out at you in that quote? (we need to allow the disorder that goes along with all change)

Why do you suppose I'm bringing this up right now?

(we are getting ready for a move that will require the community to pull together; there will be change)

How many people in this room love change?

This is such a positive change...why might it be difficult for some people? (we don't know what it will look like or be like on the other side; we like to be comfortable; fear; I prefer to keep things the way they are)

We have already gone through a lot of changes in our first five years, and these changes have caused us all to stretch. We began as a New Thought Community and have evolved to become an Interfaith Community. We were primarily a teaching center when we started. Now we are heavily engaged in Community Service, promoting regenerative agriculture, and have a Food Ministry. We have expanded our teaching from purely 'spiritual topics' to Wellness for Body, Mind, and Spirit and World Religions. My point is that we are a living, breathing, evolving organization, and we will likely continue to evolve. And not everyone is going to like that. But I can't do this any other way. Growth and change are natural. And stagnation is deadly.

What are your thoughts about all of this?

Neale Donald Walsch, in *Conversations With God*, Book 3, invites a different perspective on change:

We don't want to throw cold water on the sand in an attempt to make it concrete, but to celebrate the shifting of the sand. Celebrate its beauty as it holds itself in the shape of your castle, but then celebrate the new form and shape it takes as the tide comes in. Celebrate the shifting sands as they form the new mountains you would climb, and atop which, and with which, you will build your new castles. Yet understand that these mountains and these castles are monuments to change, not to permanence. Glorify what you are today, yet do not condemn what you were yesterday; nor preclude what you could become tomorrow. Understand that right and wrong are figments of your imagination, and okay and not okay are just pronouncements of your latest preferences and imaginings.

Any thoughts about any of this?

Community is essential to our spiritual growth. Because *you* are the Face of Spirit for me... I love my Creator by loving *you*... I worship God by blessing and praising *you*... I forgive myself when I forgive *you*... I can only experience my Oneness with the Divine by feeling *our* Unity...)

What does this Community challenge you to do...or to be?

(open my heart... to be vulnerable... to offer you my Authentic Self... shortcomings and all... and to love and accept you, just as you are... and just as you are *not*)

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

Closing Prayer

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

One Essence, One Substance, One Process...

And each of us is an intentional and irreplaceable strand in the weaving of that One Life.

We are the way Spirit comes to know what it is to be human.

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Thank you for the Graceful and Easy move into our next Spiritual Home.

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

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I walk in reverence and gratitude for all that I witness, for the gift of Life Itself, and for 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!

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...





Offertory Music Video:

 **My Kind**, by Jason Mraz



<https://youtu.be/esZSrn7ND7g>

Lucinda – Blessing for the Offering

Lucinda – Invitations

-  The Mystic Heart Book Club will start up this Tuesday with Michael Bordeaux and Chris Netto from 3-5 pm. We will be reading Conversations With God, Book 1.
-  Fast Track to Wellness meets with Rev. Diana on Thursdays from noon – 2:00 pm.
-  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.

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 eight tickets left...get them today!
-  We're gearing up for a Fundraising Parking Lot Sale to help fund our remodel and move this summer. Please bring clean, saleable items, in working order during regular gathering times. We will store them in the new building for the time being. We will need help with pricing in small time increments, and lots of things to sell. This is a great opportunity to clean out those closets and garages, and know your cool stuff is going to a good cause. Contact Rev. Diana for more information.

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: I am available after service – We invite everyone to help us make a private space for prayer here in the Sanctuary by joining us next door for lunch

Rev. Diana & Chris – Closing Song

