Getting Back to Basics

Sunday, June 9, 2024

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



Taizé

Rev. Diana – Good morning...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. We begin our Taizé with Musical Prayer.

Dalton - Taizé Chants

- Welcome Home to Your Mystic Heart, written by Diana & Chris Johnson
- One Breath at a Time, written by Karen Drucker

Rev. Diana – Moving more deeply into our Center, we feel gratitude for the multitude of gifts we are given this day... taking a long, slow, deep breath in, filling your heart with love...and as you exhale, releasing that love into the world... Now slowly inhaling a deep sense of Peace... and exhaling, sharing Peace with all that is... Abiding in the Presence of the One...

Remember with me now that all of Creation is the expression of Spirit... the body of God... Each of us is a unique thread in the beautiful tapestry of Life... A strand of consciousness weaving in and out of one another to reveal the splendor of our Unity... This morning we connect in consciousness with each other as human family, and with our Global Community... with our plant and animal siblings... with our Mother Earth, her waters, her minerals, her mountains, her weather... with our Grandfather Sky, his clouds, his stars, his planets, his galaxies... All expressions of The Infinite Nature of Spirit... each absolutely necessary to the whole...

As we acknowledge that we are all of One Essence, One Substance, One Source, we grow in compassion, empathy, and understanding. Firmly grounded in this awareness, we recognize that all that we offer into the world in thought, word, or action, affects the Whole.

With our hearts and minds consciously centered in Spirit, our collective prayer and meditation leave an imprint of Compassion and Kindness on human evolution, and on the world, for all time. Take a moment to experience the Grace we are radiating...

This month, our contemplations are centered in **New Beginnings**, and this morning's reflections encourage us to consider **Getting Back to Basics**...to simplify our approach to the spiritual journey we call Life.

There can be a lot of noise, a lot of confusion and complexity, in the world of spirituality. We are blessed with an amazing an amazing array of choices... modalities...practices...amazing tools for transformation. But so many tools can be overwhelming. We can get distracted from our real inner work as we jump from one new practice to another...as we compare ourselves to others...comparing ourselves to other people. Spiritual vocabulary can also be distracting and confusing.

While having some basic tools is helpful in the journey of Self-discovery, Spiritual Awakening is not about practices, techniques, and vocabulary...and it's not about signs and wonders. It's about waking up to the fact that there is so much more going on here than what our senses can perceive. It is a perspective shift...a shift into the heart, where we begin to sense that we are not only our bodies and our minds...we are pure spirit.

One of the most powerful tools we have at our disposal is self-reflection.

Socrates once said, "The unexamined life is not worth living." Living an unexamined life means living passively, without introspection or the pursuit of wisdom...going through life without questioning our beliefs, values, or actions. An examined life means engaging in self-reflection, critical thinking and personal growth...in a continuous process of self-discovery...in challenging one's own assumptions, seeking knowledge, and making conscious choices. Socrates believed that this is a more fulfilling and valuable way to live...and I would have to agree.

What does this look like in daily life? It might be asking myself...how are you feeling, or how did it feel when...it might involve looking at how I am behaving, or how I behaved in a prior situation...assessing the tone of voice I am using, or the way I spoke to someone yesterday...to a friend, a spouse, a person in the grocery store...and becoming curious. Next time, how would I like it to look? Next time, how will I endeavor to behave?

Self-reflection is not always comfortable. But we benefit by learning to sit with what feels uncomfortable. It stretches our patience and resilience...it builds our character. Reflection takes time and attention...it is a Practice. It might look like noticing defeating thoughts when they arise; rather than pushing them away, or replacing them with positive thoughts, inviting them in...sitting with them...and asking, "Is this really something that I believe? Is this an original thought, or something that was told to me by someone else?" Self-examination is a tool that grows awareness, and increases our ability to make conscious choices. In addition to looking at our thoughts and beliefs, we can also reflect with curiosity about our habits and behaviors. "Am I happy with the way I handled that situation, or could I have handled it differently?" "I don't like the choice I made today. This will inform my choices tomorrow." No self-judgment or condemnation. Letting it go...starting again...practicing a fresh-start mindset. I need not wait until tomorrow to begin again...we are not meant to waste our days...they are finite in number...we know not how many we will be given.

Chris – Guided Meditation

At Mystic Heart we teach that there are seven practices that we can use to further our spiritual growth and evolution... These are *Prayer... Meditation... Sacred Study...*Sacred Service... Circulation... Celebration as an expression of Gratitude... and Self-Inquiry... a deep exploration of our inner life...

Since the dawn of time, human beings have asked, "Who am I?... What am I?..." We might ponder who is asking the question... is it my mind?... my heart?... my soul?... Who or what is this I that I am?... We are spiritual beings temporarily taking human form... What does God need to experience as me?...

In the Hebrew Scriptures, Solomon's Temple was the dwelling place of the Most High... The innermost chamber – the *Holy of Holies* – was where the *Shekhinah* or presence of Yahweh appeared... Jewish mysticism, or *Kabbalah*, teaches that symbolically, the *Holy of Holies* corresponds to the human heart...

Only the High Priest was allowed to enter the *Holy of Holies*... and only once yearly, on *Yom Kippur*... In Self-Inquiry we become our own High Priests... and we have unlimited access to the Inner Sanctuary... To reflect on the contents of our heart is to worship at the altar of the Holy of Holies...

As we move into our three minutes of shared, Silent Contemplation this morning, I invite us to enter the Temple within... to breathe slowly and deeply... to focus our awareness on our heart... if you like, you may put your hand over your heart... Allow your imagination to take you deep within... to your own *Holy of Holies*... where you have an appointment with the Divine Presence... and with a sense of open and curious expectation, ask Spirit... *Who Am I?*...

Silence - 3:00

Thank you, Great Spirit for your presence in this place... in each heart... Thank you for giving us the courage to look deeply into our own nature... and for revealing ourselves to us... And thank you for the Holy Souls in this Beloved Community who support me on my Spiritual Journey... May we never forget who and Whose we are...

Self-Inquiry is an ongoing process... each of us is constantly evolving... I am not the same person I was yesterday... and with each tomorrow there will be more to explore... While we may meet challenges, never forget that there is great beauty to be found within as well...

As Rev. Diana continues her Taizé meditation this morning, we remain open and vulnerable... willing to be guided into greater and greater expressions of who we are... willing to make the effort... by **Getting Back to Basics**...

Rev. Diana – Self-reflection or self-examination is one way of **Getting Back to Basics**. There are others...nothing we haven't heard before, but are we taking time and giving attention to gratitude? Something as simple as having the privilege to pick out what you're going to eat...what a blessing...a safe and sheltered space to sleep and a

comfortable bed...a warm shower...the freedom to practice your faith (or not) as you choose...we take so much for granted.

Another basic Practice...paying attention...where are your thoughts? What is the narrative running through your head right now? Take time to sit still with yourself, connect with your Inner Guidance through journaling, study, and simply being present...service to others...and shining your Love and Light into every moment and situation. No matter how far we travel along this journey, the simple things are still important...basic kindness and compassion...no need to make things complicated...no need to get esoteric.

Basic Practices are steppingstones...tools that help us bring awareness, intention, Joy, Grace and Ease into our daily activities.

Let's close in prayer...this is our Community Prayer for June, written by Sherri Dotter. Holding this prayer as the Truth for all who reach out... please know this Truth for yourself, trusting that in our Oneness, it is True for all beings. Wholeness is forever being revealed...

New Beginnings

This month our world unifies to celebrate vibrant diversity. Sitting in prayerful silence, I recognize the Spiritual Principle of Unity through Multiplicity. Each of us is one with Spirit drawing on the Their very essence to manifest Love, Life, Light, Peace, Power, Beauty and Joy in a myriad of ways. Through Oneness and Unity, we honor and respect every individualized expression of the One Source...seeing the manifestation of Spirit on earth as truly limitless. Every individual being is unique, special and beloved.

Divine Goodness flows to, through and AS each of us. ALL PEOPLE at their very essence are God-stuff. We are, You are, I AM inherently good and a Divine inspiration in human form. Beginning again, or beginning anew, is an opportunity to choose again...to align more fully with our highest vision and version of ourselves. To fully develop our authenticity.

My heartfelt prayer is for each of us to keep moving towards more authentic, more loving and more inclusive choices. As each of us does our own work in becoming our best version of ourselves (as only each can determine for themselves), the community of Mystic Heart becomes the best version of itself, and this keeps radiating out into and AS our collective consciousness.

"As within, so without, as above, so below, as the universe, so the soul." Our Spiritual Practice on an individual level is the expression of God themselves and is out pictured in our Spiritual Community, friendships, family, local community, city, state and country...moving us ever closer to a Love-Soaked World...living in complete Oneness and Unity.

I am so thankful for the creation of Mystic Heart this same month 5 years ago and excited for our new location! I am so grateful for the many opportunities we have on a personal level and collective level to practice, to collaborate and to celebrate New Beginnings. I know that each of you is an integral aspect of our community with Divine gifts and talents that only you can share.

I release my prayer to the One that gets it done! Knowing that a prayer spoken is a prayer answered. I am complete. And so it is! Amen.

Dalton – Musical Meditation

One With the Divine, written by Gary Lynn Floyd & Doug LeBow

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 - 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. 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

Love Cover Me, written by Danny Lee Miller & 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 - Taizé Closing Song

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

Conscious Conversation

Lucinda – Opening Prayer

Rev. Diana – Good morning and welcome, or welcome back...and 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.

Dalton – Opening Music

- ** Welcome to the Mystic Heart, written by Diana & Chris Johnson
- One Big Family, written by Robin Hackett & Gary Lynn Floyd

**Opening Up (in Sweet Surrender), written by Rainbow Spirit, Oregon

Let's take a creative journey...calling upon the full power of both mind and heart...engaging the body...and joining with one another in the imaginal realm, in service to the creation of a **Love-Soaked World**.

See and feel with me now, a world in which all inhabitants of this planet live from our Highest Potential... 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 Mother Earth 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 aligning our every thought, word, and action with our vision, we are creating a world in which all people are well-fed... have the safety and comfort of home and a deep sense of purpose and belonging. A world in which health, education, and healthy relationships are supported by social systems grounded in Integrity, Compassion and Wholeness.

Valuing every being for its uniqueness... we practice living truly 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... greed is a thing of the past, as generosity flows 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 recognize 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 Beloved Community stands as an open and welcoming place for all who seek support, belonging, Family.

By the power of our deep faith and inspired action, this prayer is acted upon, answered even as it is spoken, for Spirit knows our heart's desire and intent. In full expectation of its Graceful unfolding...we release our prayer to the Creative Power and Intelligence that I call God... to the One that gets it done... Let It Be!... 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 **New Beginnings**, and the topic of Conversation today is **Getting Back to Basics**.

This morning during Taizé, we spent time in contemplation of the statement, "An unexamined life is not worth living," first spoken by Socrates. We began our reflections

with the idea that there can be a lot of noise, a lot of confusion and complexity, in the world of spirituality. We are blessed with an amazing an amazing array of choices... modalities...practices...amazing tools for transformation. But that so many tools can be overwhelming. We can get distracted from our real inner work as we jump from one new practice to another...comparing ourselves to other people...and looking outside of ourselves for answers. And we admitted that Spiritual vocabulary can also be distracting, confusing, or even triggering.

While having some basic tools is helpful in the journey of Self-discovery, Spiritual Awakening is not about practices, techniques, and vocabulary...and it's not about signs and wonders. It's about waking up to the fact that there is so much more going on here than our senses can perceive. It's really more of a perspective shift...a shift into the heart, where we begin to sense that we are not only our bodies and our minds...we are pure spirit.

We spent time with the idea that self-reflection is a basic tool that aids our process of Spiritual Awakening. We also considered other basic practices...gratitude, sitting quietly with the self, journaling as a means of connecting to Inner Guidance, Sacred Service, and others. Now we're going to pivot and begin our Conversation. Last week we talked about how whether we know it or not, whether we like it or not, we are creating our tomorrows in every moment of *Now*. And we looked specifically at some things we needed to let go of so that we could learn to be present.

What were the main things we talked about letting go of? (Regret, resentment...practicing forgiveness for self and others)

These are not the only things that get in the way of living in the moment, and of **New Beginnings** in our lives.

What are some other things that we need to let go of?

(our narratives, our stories; resistance to change; the need to be right; attachment to how things must be for me to be happy)

I'd like to focus on just two of these stumbling blocks to **New Beginnings**, to living in the moment, and to Spiritual Awakening. Let's start with narratives.

What are our narratives?

(the stories we tell ourselves about everything; the underlying assumptions about the world, ourselves, and other people; the on-going commentary that rattles on in our heads incessantly, disturbing our peace and informing our actions)

We all have a story, maybe more than one. It's usually one that we carry from our younger years and is so ingrained that we are barely aware that it's there...or completely unaware. But it IS there, playing itself on repeat and stopping us from pursuing what we truly desire. We might even be subconsciously shaping our environment and life in a way that allows the story to play out.

What's the problem with narratives?

They are limiting; they define what is possible. They cause us to jump to inaccurate conclusions, to make poor choices. And often they are at least partially untrue, sometimes completely false. So we're walking around in a dream, we're sleepwalking. We're living fictional lives.

What are some common narratives?

Nobody likes or accepts me. What effects might this have?

This may cause you to avoid deep relationships because you think you're not capable. You don't put yourself out there to meet others, because they won't like you anyway.

I'm not intelligent. What effects might this have?

This might cause you to feel incompetent when trying to understand information or develop your thoughts. You might avoid work or conversation with others that requires you to form and share your opinions.

I'm overweight. What effects might this have?

You may have grown up believing that you had no willpower when it comes to food. So you overdo it every night, proving to yourself that your story is correct.

Life is hard...men are dangerous...women are flighty...you get the picture.

What might change if we were to let go of our stories? (we might have clearer perception of who and what was before us; we would feel and express more curiosity, ask more questions, because we wouldn't have it all figured out in advance;)

What is the Truth about us? What is the Truth about you?

I Am created in the image and likeness of my Creator. The book of Psalms reminds us: "I have said, Ye are gods; and all of you are children of the Most High". (Psalm 82:6)

St. Paul writes, in the book of Acts: "We are the offspring of the God of the Universe." (Acts 17:28-29)

How different would our lives be if we lived according to that story, not in an arrogant way, but in an empowered way? With Spiritual Authority?

What are we afraid of?

There is a Marianne Williamson quote that cannot be repeated too often. Maybe close your eyes and take this in:

"Our greatest fear is not that we are inadequate, but that we are powerful beyond measure. It is our light, not our darkness that frightens us. We ask ourselves, who am I to be brilliant, gorgeous, handsome, talented, and fabulous? Actually, who are you not to be? You are a child of God. Your playing small does not serve the world. There is nothing enlightened about shrinking so that other people won't feel insecure around you. We were born to make manifest the glory of God within us. It is not just in some; it is in everyone. And, as we let our own light shine, we unconsciously give other people permission to do the same. As we are liberated from our fear, our presence automatically liberates others." Breathe that in for a moment.

Okay, before we wrap up for today, I'd like to spend a few moments talking about another thing that we have to let go of if we are to live in the present, creating **New Beginnings**. We have to release our resistance to change.

How many people in this room just LOVE change?

What's your favorite kind of change?

What changes are most difficult for you?

These are our experiences...they are also our narratives. Which came first?

We may not know which came first...at this point, it may not even matter; what matters is that changing the narrative will change the experience. Let's get back to dropping resistance to change...

On a podcast called Spiritually Hungry, Michael Berg injected some humor: "There's no cure...change is a chronic condition." We are living beings. Life is change. We are in this world to experience change and to become more graceful in the experience. Resistance is futile.

Change can be proactive...what does that mean?

(we choose to change; this is where we voluntarily engage with and enjoy and welcome the change, or at least accept it with Grace.

It can also be painful...what do I mean by this? What are some examples of painful change?

(caused by external conditions or past habits and behavior patterns, forcing a change)

My first teacher said that we change and grow either by inspiration or desperation. We do not and cannot remain static. It behooves us to set up an environment, a lifestyle, and a community that encourages and supports proactive change, and where you are accepted unconditionally, just as you are, and just as you are not, every step of the way.

The Kabbalah tells us, "If you look inside and don't see anything you need to change, you haven't truly begun your spiritual journey...you haven't seen into the deeper truth of who you are...you are lacking in self-knowledge."

It goes on to say that we always have the chance to make a change, to begin again, because... "For every breath we thank the Creator, because every breath is a new breath of life."

In its teachings it suggests that we see our life as a continuum, but that is not really true. We are not alive in this moment because we were alive a moment ago...we are alive in this moment because we are being infused with new life...not only infused with breath for our bodies, but infused with spiritual life for our souls. When we exhale, it is not a given that we will take our next breath. When we look at our life as a constant renewal, the next breath is a new me. And so, in the big picture, it doesn't matter that I made a mistake a minute ago, because the very next breath is a brand new person.

Isn't that beautiful? Thoughts about any of this?

A couple of closing thoughts...If I am here in this world, there is something that I can change to bring benefit to my life and the world.

And if there's something I wish to have in my life that has not yet come, there is more to do. This could mean making space in my life for something new, or growing my self-awareness so that I am able to welcome it in. Or it could mean letting go of needing to have it in order for me to be happy. Either way, it's an active process.

The kind of change I'm working toward is essential change...not only a change in form, but a change in the very essence of who I Am...a Change in the essence of what it means to be human. The depth of change that I'm talking about can best be reached by way of the imaginal realm...the mysterious dimension where the unconscious can be brought to light, interacted with, and re-framed, so that our experience of the past, present, and future is changed. More on that in a couple of weeks...

For now, let's close in prayer...

Let's move into the heart space...deeper and deeper inward...

Allow yourself to return to your own Holy of Holies...

At the heart of all that is...One Source...One Life...One...

Forever Loving, forever giving of Their Infinite Nature

Becoming all of creation, experiencing Life as me, as you, as all that has ever existed and all that will ever be.

I Am, You Are, made of Godstuff...there is nothing else.

Pure, unblemished, Whole and Complete...

We know this as we open the eye of the heart...

Take a moment to feel and know your own Divinity.

We give thanks for this beautiful day, and all of the blessings that are constantly showered down upon us, and around us.

We give thanks for the opportunity to gather with our chosen family in celebration and communion with God.

We give thanks for this amazing life, with all that it brings...those things that are graceful, easy, and beautiful...and those circumstances that grow me in patience, resilience, character and Love.

We give thanks for, and celebrate our diversity during this month of June, so grateful to have a community where are all truly welcomed and valued.

From this place of gratitude, and in faith that my prayer is answered even before it is spoken, I release it now to the Loving and Lawful Presence that I call God. It is done...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.

Rev. Diana – 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

Let the Past Go, written by Karl Anthony

https://youtu.be/OEdNx0i7Q6I

Lucinda - Blessing for the Offering

Lucinda – Invitations

- The Mystic Heart Book Club is meeting on Tuesdays from 3-5 pm. We are enjoying great discussions as we read Conversations With God, Book 1.
- Please consider joining us on Wednesday for our weekly work session on the new building. Gather at 1:00pm in the new location to lend a hand. Wear your grubbies!
- Fast Track to Wellness will gather this week in Sacred Service. Join us Thursday from noon 2:00pm and beyond to finish pricing items for the Parking Lot Sale.
- Metaphysical Bible meets this Thursday, from 3-5 pm for the last time until late August or early September. Join us in the fall for an in depth look at the symbology and message offered by the book of Revelation. More information to come.
- We're gearing up for the Parking Lot Sale next Friday and Saturday. If you have extra hangers, clothing racks, or folding tables we could borrow, please contact Rev. Diana. Also, please bring as many paper or plastic grocery bags as you can spare to the Gathering Place. Come and check out all the great stuff people have donated. You may find something you can't resist!
- Mystic Heart will have a booth at the Pride Festival on June 22nd from 11:00 am 4:00 pm on the Market Street Promenade. Set-up begins at 9:00 and we'll be done and on our way by 5:00pm. Come and lend...it should be a blast. Please contact Rev. Diana to sign up to help tend the booth.
- Mark your calendar...Mystic OAKS will be going on adventure to Lavineyard Farms in Whitmore California on Saturday, July 13th ...meet to carpool at 9:00

am, or meet us at the Farm at 10:00. Bring a picnic lunch, tour the farm, and gather a bundle of Lavendar to take home. Cost: \$9/person.

Please join April Jimenez-WinterSky, Saturday, July 20th 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 June Bulletin and online soon.

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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