

If Not Now, When?

Sunday, July 7, 2024

Rev. Diana Johnson, with Sherr Dotter, RScP,
Chris Johnson, RScP, and musician Dalton Fitzgerald



An Independent Interfaith Community
Practicing the Possible Through Prayer

Taizé

Rev. Diana – We follow the sound of the bell inward...

3 Bells

Sherri – Opening Prayer

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

 **Dropping Down**, written by Karen Drucker, Amy Bishop, & Gary Lynn Floyd

Rev. Diana – Settling into this one, perfect moment, we take a moment to breathe...to allow the breath to bring us fully present...following it in, and feeling the life flowing into every cell, every atom...and following it out, letting go of any tension...with every breath in, feeling your body come to life, and with every breath out, relaxing the body.

As we become more and more present, we allow attention to rest on the deep Connection we share with all of life...with our *Global Community*. We acknowledge the Light of Spirit that enlivens every person...every more-than-human creature...every plant, rock, and grain of sand...every drop of water...all that is seen and that which is not...that which is known and that which will never be known...all connected at the deepest level...all teeming with the life of God, shining with the Light of Spirit. We are truly of One Essence, One Substance, One Source. And this One Source is expressing and experiencing Itself, right here and now, in, through and AS each one of us, and through all of Creation.

As we take the time to sense our Oneness, and acknowledge our interdependence, we can only grow in compassion, empathy, and understanding. We come to understand that every thought, word, and action matters. And we take care...

This month, our contemplations are centered in **Living Buddha, Living Chris**, and this morning we contemplate the question ***If Not Now, When?***

It is easy to fall into the habit of putting things off. Procrastination is built into our culture. As children, we can't wait to grow up. Then we'll get to do everything we want to. We graduate high school, and we figure that once we've finished college, or have secured a good job, then life will really begin. Then we think we need to buy a car, or a house...we need a life partner, a career...then everything will be right. Before we know it, we may find ourselves thinking, "When I retire...then I'll have the time and money to really live the life I've always wanted to live."

This same habit often permeated our spiritual lives, as well. How many of us have every felt that we're not 'spiritual enough'...that there is some future time when our minds won't wander and race during meditation...when we will remember to take our troubles to prayer before worry sets in...when we will attain some kind of awareness or enlightenment that will make our lives so much easier...and *then* it will be much easier to hold more loving thoughts and speak more kindly...to love even those who challenge us to our core.

We are here this morning to be reminded that the only moment we ever have is Now...the one life we have to live is happening right Now...and we have no idea how many of those moments we may be granted.

I Am a spiritual being having a human experience...and so are you. Neither of us will ever be more spiritual than we are right Now. It will always take our attention...our awareness...and willingness to think loving thoughts, speak kind words, and love our neighbors...especially those Sacred Friends that are here to stretch our patience, compassion, and understanding, or to teach us the gentle art of forgiveness.

There is no better time than Now to choose to live in Peace...within our own hearts...in our families, with our neighbors, and in our Communities.

There is no better time than Now to choose an attitude of Radical Compassion for those less fortunate than ourselves...for those whose lives have led them to ways we do not understand... "What is it like to be you...to have experienced all that *you* have...what is it like to be in *your* body, in *your* mind, in *your* emotional state...to have the challenges you have dealt with?"

There is no better time than Now to step into our Buddha Nature...to let the Christ Consciousness that lies at the core every being shine forth. This, too, is a choice...one that we make again and again and again...one that takes our commitment to be our best selves in every moment.

We may have a belief that says, "This is too hard...it's not reasonable...it's expecting too much." I am here to be the voice of Spirit, gently whispering the question, "If not now, when?" There is no better time than Now.

Chris – Guided Meditation

Our topic for today is the ending of a longer quote from the great Jewish mystic Rabbi Hillel... He taught during the first century Before the Common Era, and into the first

Century of the Common era... He said, "If I am not for myself, who is for me? But if I am for my own self [only], what am I? And if not now, when?..."

"If I am not for myself, who is for me?..." If I don't stand up for myself, who will?... And if I do not have the courage to call out injustices directed at *me*, how will I ever be able to help my siblings who cannot defend themselves?... Rabbi Hillel reminds us that we are all entitled to be treated with dignity...

"But if I am for my own self [only], what am I?..." We each have Divine Gifts to share with the world... we are meant to live, grow, and share in community... to serve, love, and support one another... If *my* spiritual growth does not help evolve humankind as a whole, it has no real meaning or value...

"And if not now, when?..." It is said that *God does not call the qualified... God qualifies those who are called...* We cannot wait until we feel up to the challenge... we need to have faith that if it is *before* us, it is *for* us... When we recognize injustice, it is *right then* that we are being called to intervene...

In our three minutes of Silent Contemplation this morning, I invite you to remember a time when somebody stood up for you or spoke up to defend you... perhaps in your childhood... or in another vulnerable period... Remember how it made you feel... Now, consider what they might have been feeling... Where did they find the courage to speak up?... and how might *you* find the courage to call out injustice the next time you see it?... Let their example inspire you...

Silence – 3:00

Divine Beloved, we give profound thanks for this time of communion and contemplation... Thank you for the courage to act on our faith... and to rely on your guidance... And thank you for these Beloved Souls who support me on this journey... May we never forget who and Whose we are...

The Great Soul, Mohandas Gandhi said, "It's the action, not the fruit of the action, that's important. You have to do the right thing. It may not be in your power, or in your time, that there'll be any fruit. But that doesn't mean you stop doing the right thing. You may never know what results come from your action. But if you do nothing, there will be no result."

As this morning's Taizé continues, we receive Rev. Diana's inspired message with open minds and courageous hearts... Encouraged into active compassion and justice... If not us, who?... *If Not Now, When?...*

Rev. Diana

Thich Nhat Hanh reminds us that the Buddha and Jesus of Nazareth were perhaps the two most pivotal figures in the history of humankind. Each one left behind a legacy of teachings and practices that have shaped the lives of billions of people over the course

of two millennia. He invites us to contemplate...if these two men were to meet on the road today, what would each think of the other's spiritual views and practices?

It seems to me that they would find much more in common than what divides them. The Buddha taught that by the eightfold path, we are to work for the end of suffering...that by right view, resolve, speech, and conduct...through right livelihood, effort, mindfulness and samadhi, we are in service to the Whole, making the world a better place.

Jesus taught that by following the two great commandments... "Love the Lord, your God, with all of your heart, soul, mind and strength" and "Love your neighbor as yourself", we would bring the Kingdom of Heaven to earth.

Both of them saw the purpose of a human life to be Service to something greater than oneself. They shared the belief that every being has Buddha Nature...or Christ Consciousness...fully formed and waiting to be discovered and released in the world...That it is not something we build through study and practice...Rather, it is who and what we are by our very nature.

In the Gospel of Thomas, Logion 70, Yeshua says, "If you bring forth what is within you, what you bring forth will save you. If you do not bring forth what is within you, what you do not bring forth will destroy you." Take moment of silence with that verse...what does it have to offer in your life right now?

"If you bring forth what is within you, what you bring forth will save you. If you do not bring forth what is within you, what you do not bring forth will destroy you."

Silence – 1 minute

Join me in Prayer...

There is only One...Essence, Substance, Process...

One Source of all that is...Infinitely Loving, Love in action.

Everywhere Present, the Presence of Life in all that exists.

Intimately Involved with all of Creation...expressing and knowing Itself in, through and as all that is, was, and ever shall be.

Forever and eternally Just...Righteousness in action...

Lawful...receiving what we offer and reflecting it back so that we might become more and more aware of our potential.

And Graceful beyond all measure...the very quality of Grace, turning all things to Good.

This One is the Light that shines in every human heart...the Life that breathes every one of us, no matter the appearance.

It is ours to remember the Truth...to uncover that Light within ourselves, so that it may shine into the world.

And it is ours to see that Light in others...in ALL others.

Remember, in Truth, there are no others. We are all individual expressions of the One. Rather than being difficult to remember, and to practice, I know this Truth to ease my every step. As I sink into the Truth of who and whose I Am, my choices become much simpler

Everything else falls away but this one question...what would love do now?

I release any argument that may try to form in my mind, any thought that the spiritual journey must be difficult, arduous...this is all story...illusion.

And I welcome the Grace that is freely given, relaxing into my True Self and allowing It to lead the way.

I give thanks for this beautiful day...no matter what conditions appear. For conditions are impermanent...they change from one moment to the next.

Truth is eternal...Love is the answer to every question, the solution to every challenge.

I give thanks for my spiritual family, and for the support and love that is given so freely and received so willingly.

And I give thanks for this beautiful space, knowing that our right and perfect Next-Yet-To-Be is already present in the Mind of the One, and is coming into form as we listen for Guidance and follow.

Trusting that every prayer is answered even before it is spoken, I release my Word, trusting in its Power...the job is already done, and I watch in joyful expectation as it moves into experience. I call it done...and so it is! Amen!

Dalton – Musical Meditation

 ***Christ in Me, Christ in You***, written by Gary Lynn Floyd

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. We acknowledge and give thanks for the infinite abundance of Spirit. We are Living in the Overflow!

Dalton – Offertory Music

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

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

Sherri – 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

 ***Metta Prayer***, written by Tienne Beaulieu

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... 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 ***Living Buddha, Living Christ***, and the topic of Conversation today is ***If Not Now, When?***

This morning during Taizé, we spent time reflecting on how we, as human beings, tend to put things off. We seem to have the view that some other time will be better to get something done, or to make a needed change, or to experience the Good in our lives as a present moment experience.

We also contemplated the idea that this same habit often permeates our spiritual lives, as well. "I'm not 'spiritual enough'...someday, my mind won't wander and race during meditation...then maybe I'll remember to take my troubles to prayer before worry sets in...life will be so much easier...and *then* I will be able to hold loving thoughts and speak more kindly...to love even those who challenge us to our core." And then came the bad news, and the good news.

What do you think it was?

The only moment we ever have is Now...the one life we have to live is happening right Now...and we have no idea how many of those moments we may be granted; Neither of us will ever be more spiritual than we are right Now. It will always take our attention...our awareness...and willingness to think loving thoughts, speak kind words, and love our neighbors...especially those Sacred Friends that are here to stretch our patience, compassion, and understanding, or to teach us the gentle art of forgiveness.

There is no better time than Now to choose to live in Peace...within our own hearts...in our families, with our neighbors, and in our Communities.

There is no better time than Now to choose an attitude of Radical Compassion for those less fortunate than ourselves...for those whose lives have led them to ways we do not understand... “What is it like to be you...to have experienced all that *you* have...what is it like to be in *your* body, in *your* mind, in *your* emotional state...to have the challenges you have dealt with?”

There is no better time than Now to step into our Buddha Nature...to let the Christ Consciousness that lies at the core every being shine forth. This, too, is a choice...one that we make again and again and again...one that takes our commitment to be our best selves in every moment.

“If not now, when?” There is no better time than Now.

What gets in the way?

(habits; preferences; laziness; lack of confidence/self-worth; excuses; self-absorption; entitlement; over-commitment)

Why do you think we're (humans) here on the planet?

(to serve as the self-reflective, choice-makers, in stewardship to all of creation)

Some would say that we're here to transcend the material plane; to come to know ourselves as the spiritual beings that we are, to uncover our Light.

But why does it matter that we come to know our own Light?

(so we can shine it in the world – we are Servants of the Divine, and we serve God by serving one another)

This month's theme is *Living Buddha, Living Christ*.

How do you interpret this theme? What might it be pointing to?

(that each of us has Buddha Nature/Christ Consciousness as our True Nature)

In Taizé, we read a quote from Thich Nhat Hanh. He invited us to contemplate...if Buddha and Jesus were to meet on the road today, what would each think of the other's spiritual views and practices?

What do you think? Were they more similar or different?

Buddha and Jesus taught non-attachment to the material realm...Buddha, by speaking of impermanence and how attachment to the material realm brings suffering, and Jesus by warning: “Do not store up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moths and vermin destroy, and where thieves break in and steal; But store up for yourselves treasures in heaven...”

Another idea they shared in common was living “the middle way...finding balance and avoiding extremes.” The Buddha taught and lived ‘the middle way’ in terms of finding

balance and harmony in all things, so as to minimize suffering; and Jesus, lived the Middle Way by serving as an example of one who accepts the ambiguities of being both Divine and human.

Both the Buddha and Jesus taught by example that our purpose here was to Serve others, to reduce suffering, and to bring the Kingdom of Heaven to Earth...that this was our Nature. Buddha called it Buddha Nature and Jesus called it the Father Within, but they were the same concept. Both of these great teachers lived what they taught...their lives were their teachings. I'd like to wrap up with a verse from the Gnostic Gospel of Thomas. I read it at Taizé, but I'd like to talk a bit about it. It is from Logion 70.

Yeshua says, "If you bring forth what is within you, what you bring forth will save you. If you do not bring forth what is within you, what you do not bring forth will destroy you." And the question we sat with was...what does it have to offer in your life right now?

"If you bring forth what is within you, what you bring forth will save you. If you do not bring forth what is within you, what you do not bring forth will destroy you."

Anything you'd like to share?

Anything else that wants to be shared before we close in prayer?

Let's pray...

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

Allow yourself to return to the Truth about your...

To your Divine Center, your True Nature...

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 God Stuff...there is nothing else.

Created in the image and likeness of Source...

Pure, unblemished, Whole and Complete...

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 us in patience, resilience, character and Love.

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.

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.


Thank you, Dalton, for joining us this week. It's always great to have you here. We're going to share a couple of songs today, since we can. This first one invites us to pay attention to the kinds of questions we are asking of Spirit. Listen carefully.


Dalton – Offertory Music


 **Om Namō Bhagavate**, traditional arranged by Shantala (Benjy & Heather Wertheimer)

Sherri – Blessing for the Offering & 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. We have jobs for everyone. Wear your grubbies!

 **Fast Track to Wellness will gather this week on Thursday from 12 – 2 pm.** We'll be splitting out time between Dr. Joe Dispenza's *Breaking the Habit of Being Yourself* and *Caring for Our Skin as We Sage*. Drop-ins are welcome.

 **Mystic OAKS will be going on adventure to Lavineyard Farms, plus Dakaro Cellars Winery in Whitmore California, Saturday July 13, 2024 10 am- 3:00 p.m.** 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. There are flyers available for you to take.

 **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.

Mark Your Calendars...

 **Metaphysical Bible Study** will return on **Thursday, August 22nd** from **3:00 – 5:00 pm**. Join Prayer Practitioner Chris Johnson for a metaphysical romp through the book of Revelation!

There is more information available in the July Bulletin and online.

Information Cards if new people

Prayer Requests: I am available after service for prayer, or fill out a prayer card and I 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 & Gary Lynn Floyd



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