Planting Seeds of Vulnerability

Sunday, April 26, 2026

Chris Johnson, RScP, with Rev. Diana Johnson, IM, RScM, & musician Marsh Brodeur

An Independent Interfaith Community
Practicing the Possible Through Prayer

Taizé

Call to Awareness – 3 Bells

Rev. Diana – Opening Prayer

Chris – Good morning, and welcome. If you're new with us here this morning, my name is Chris Johnson, Prayer Practitioner here at Mystic Heart. Let's begin our Taizé Experience this morning with a couple of deep breaths… letting go… fully arriving in this moment… and joining our voices in musical prayer.

Rev. Diana, Chris, & Marsh – Taizé Chants

- ***Welcome Home to Your Mystic Heart***, written by Diana & Chris Johnson
- ***Oyaheya (Praise the Spirit)***, written by Rickie Byars

Chris – Let us move more deeply into the flow of Taizé by once again stilling the body… let your chair support you… and take a couple of long, deep conscious breaths… as the body relaxes, allow the breath to become slow and quiet. (Pause)

It is in this calm that you find your Center…your place of deep Peace and Connection with Source…where you can let go and surrender to the Grace and Beauty of Life. It is in this Heart Space that you recognize the many blessings that surround you…and where you can feel a profound sense of gratitude for those gifts.

Your heart is the tabernacle of the Great Spirit, the Creator of all that is on Earth, and all that exists in the universe. It is the Realm of Heaven that lies within us and all around us. It is the home of your Authentic Self… the image and likeness of God… the Divine expressing through and as you. Oyaheya…Praise the Spirit.

Let us take a moment to acknowledge the Potent Spiritual Qualities expressing throughout our Global Community, knowing that Spirit showers Its blessings on all equally… as we acknowledge our oneness with All That Is.

Together, we envision a web of consciousness that infuses and surrounds the planet… each of us a Radiant point of Light… a jewel in Indra's Net…connected to all others.(Pause) As we sense the interconnectedness of every human being, we extend our Vision to include all creatures everywhere…each one shimmering with its own unique Light…and then extending further to include every plant and tree, every rock and grain of sand, every drop of water…the soil, the stars, the clouds, all radiating Spirit's

Light…God expressing and experiencing Itself by means of Its Creation…and we see that there are no spaces between us…our web has become one continuous field of Consciousness…we sense that there is no beginning, no ending…we feel it extending out beyond our beautiful planet, into the cosmos…the Body of God.

Filled to overflowing with Its Light, we share a heartfelt intention for our time together…to feel and experience the Truth of who we are; we acknowledge our responsibility to one another as members of one human family, and as co-creators and caretakers of this beautiful planet; and we grow in awareness and courage so that we might consciously ***Plant Seeds of Vulnerability.***

As we join in consciousness with all of Creation, our Work here is empowered…Our collective prayer and meditation leave a positive imprint on the world…on the Whole of Creation. Together, we consciously create a huge ripple of Compassion and Caring, of Peace and Joy, of Beauty and Grace, that directly imprints upon the Whole for all time… we invoke the Loving Presence and Intelligence that gives shape and form to the transformation that is occurring in our lives, and on our planet.

Right here and now, in the silence, by means of this Beloved Community Gathering, the inherent wholeness of Creation is being revealed.

Planting seeds of vulnerability within ourselves is not for the timid. It means letting go of the defense mechanisms many of us have spent a lifetime building. It means overriding the ego, our instinctive drive to survive. There was a time in human history that the ego served us well. It alerted us when there was a real danger present, such as a large predatory animal. The ego would send a fight-or-flight message to our limbic system, releasing a flood of adrenaline to increase our energy and alertness.

As the human family has evolved and we have built safer environments to live in, the ego has developed new ways of *protecting* us. Although we still may encounter a large mean dog or other dangerous animal, often what our ego defends us from is more along the lines of embarrassment, criticism, or loss of control: not really life-threatening incidents. Yet the ego screams at us, “You’re in danger! You’re too vulnerable!”

The word vulnerable stems from the Latin *vulnus*, meaning *wound*: when we are vulnerable we are unprotected, capable of being wounded. But it is important to understand clearly what it is we are seeking protection from… what we are afraid of. We have all survived embarrassment, loss of a friend or lover, harsh criticism. There is no reason to think we won’t survive it again.

But when we don’t allow ourselves to be vulnerable, we don’t just protect ourselves from the bad things that might happen. We also *protect* ourselves from the possibility of friendship… of love… of genuine connection with another person. It is only when we let our guard down, when we open our heart *fully* to one another, that the magic of relationship can unfold between and among us.

Can we let go of the person we think we *should be* presenting in order to share our Authentic Self? Are we willing to invest our time, energy, and emotions in a new relationship, even though there is no guarantee it will work out? Are we willing to take the risk of being the first to say, "I love you?" This is embracing our vulnerability, and it is the essential first step to co-creating authentic relationships in our lives.

Rev. Diana – Guided Meditation

In order to be willing to surrender into vulnerability, human beings need to feel safe. We need to be able to trust that the people to whom we reveal ourselves will accept us for who we are…will accept and appreciate us, even when we're a little off beat…will love and care for us, through the ups and downs of life…will forgive us our trespasses when they inevitably occur.

It is truly a blessing when we find such people…when we are drawn into relationships that feel safe, with people who are sincerely accepting…authentic…and kind. And sadly, it seems rare in today's world.

Mystic Heart is one such place…a welcoming and accepting Spiritual Community…a place where people come together, not as groups separated by their *differences*, but as human beings celebrated for their *individuality*…a place where people feel seen, heard, and supported as they explore their own spirituality, and seek their own Wisdom and Guidance…a place where authenticity and true human connection is deeply valued and practiced…we feel included, known, and loved.

We prepare ourselves now for musical meditation. We maintain our slow, quiet breathing…our stillness…our groundedness…and we let the energy and message to lift our vibration, to open our heart, to bring a smile to our face. We are so grateful for this place…we have found a safe place to land.

Musical Meditation – *Safe Place to Land* by Jami Lula – 4:07

Chris – Dr. Brené Brown, a researcher who studies the roles of courage, vulnerability, and shame in human relationships, offers some keen insights to vulnerability:

> Connection is why we're here. It's what gives purpose and meaning to our lives. This is what it's all about. Vulnerability is the core, the heart, the center of meaningful human experiences.
>
> This is what I have found: we need to let ourselves be seen, deeply seen, vulnerably seen; to love with our whole hearts, to practice gratitude and joy in those moments of terror, when we're wondering, "Can I love you this much? Can I believe in this passionately? Can I be this fierce about this?" Just to be able to stop and, instead of catastrophizing what might happen, to say, "I'm just so grateful, because to feel this vulnerable means I'm alive."

Living authentically is risky business. If we speak from the depths of our truest heart with radical honesty to another person, they may not like us anymore. But if we dare to take

that risk, we open the door to the possibility of authentic connection. If we choose not to take that chance, we will never know what might have been.

Vulnerability is not weakness… it is not timidity. It requires great strength and courage to leave oneself undefended. We live in a world where there is far too much fear and distrust among people. Spirit did not create us to live this way. We are meant to be connected in meaningful ways, for it is only in relationship that we can see and acknowledge the Divine Light in one another's eyes. We are created to love and serve one another, and to remember who and whose we are.

I'd like to leave you with another insight from Brené Brown:

> …without question, putting ourselves out there means there's a far greater risk of getting criticized or feeling hurt. But when we step back and examine our lives, we will find that nothing is as uncomfortable, dangerous, or hurtful as standing on the outside looking in and wondering what it would be like if we had the courage to step into the arena.

It is a profound act of love and courage for us to step into the arena…

Musical Meditation– *Love Cover Me*, by Gary Lynn Floyd

Let us close in prayer

Great Spirit… Divine Creator of all that is… thank you for this day… for the life-giving rain… and for the promise of sunshine yet to come… Thank you for this Beloved Community… this spiritual family of sainted souls gathered together in sacred communion with you and with one another.

We invite your Spirit to flow powerfully through our hearts this morning, that we may have the strength and courage to be vulnerable in all of our relationships. Help us to embrace our imperfections and to fully own our mistakes, so that we may leave behind anything and everything that would impede authentic intimacy with one another. Let us cultivate the confidence to risk full self-revelation, allowing others to see our Authentic Self, just as we are… and just as we are not. Give us the courage and humility to ask for help when we need it, and the generosity to freely offer support to others in their time of need. And throughout this Process of transformation, help us always to treat ourselves and others with great compassion, warmth, and understanding.

I offer this prayer in profound gratitude, knowing that Spirit is responding even now… the Great Mystery is moving within us… The transformation has begun, and we accept and allow it to grow us. Thank you Spirit. Amen.

I invite us to bring our awareness back to our bodies… back to this time and place… and to our Beloved Community. As you feel ready, gently open your eyes and behold what is before you… look around… really see the Love that surrounds you here this morning. It is safe to be vulnerable here.

Love Offering

As we prepare to close our Taizé Meditation, we offer the opportunity for you to share of your financial good in support of the work we do. Circulation is a Sacred Practice that supports your Mystic Heart.

It is by your generous gifts that we can continue the Good Work of supporting you and engaging in the greater Community. If you're joining us online, at mysticheart.org you can use a Donate Button, a Venmo qr code, or our mailing address to make your contribution. We thank you in advance for your heartfelt generosity.

As we pass the basket, please enjoy *In Front of You*, by RhythmVerse; it's presented as a love song, but the lyrics can apply to any relationship.

"In Front of You" – A Song About Vulnerability and Healing (Official Lyric Video) **https://youtu.be/Mg-orJbOh3g**

Chris – Blessing for the Offering

Brief Invitations – Just a heads up for those who won't be here for all of the invitations:

- **Harvey Tickets for May 27th** Help us fill the house! From now until the show, we will present a weekly prize for the top ticket-seller!
- **Parking Lot Sale, May 29th & 30th** We will begin accepting donations of clean, gently used items of all kinds. Please contact Rev. Diana if you can volunteer to help with the sale in any capacity.

Now, let us bless one another with music as we close out our Taizé. I encourage you to be vulnerable: make eye contact with others as you bless them!

Rev. Diana, Chris, & Marsh – Taizé Closing Song

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

Conscious Conversation

Rev. Diana – Opening Prayer

Chris – Welcome or welcome back… and thank you for joining us this morning. If you're new with us here this morning… my name is Chris Johnson, and I am a Credentialed Prayer Practitioner here at Mystic Heart Spiritual Center. We are an Independent Interfaith Community that teaches Universal Principles and Practical Spirituality, tracing the common threads of Truth that run through all the world's great spiritual traditions. Our primary message is that all the Wisdom and Guidance you need lives within your own Mystic Heart. I pray that something you hear today will point you in that direction.

Let's get our Conversation started by joining our voices in song and giving our bodies a chance to move!

Rev. Diana, Chris, & Marsh – Opening Music

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

- ***One Big Family***, written by Robin Hackett & Gary Lynn Floyd
- ***Stand***, written by **Karen Drucker**

Chris – We *are* a Stand for Peace…We *are* a stand for Love…We *are* a Stand for Joy, and we *are* making a new world now. Please follow me into the creative space of the imaginal realm…and Vision with me a new version of life on earth, a ***Love-Soaked World***… in which all humans are living from their deepest Wisdom and Generosity, and their most Loving nature… thoughtful of the impact their thoughts, words, and actions have on one another, the community, and the planet… a world beyond greed, abundance is realized in simply having enough… a world where nutritious food, clean water and air are readily available to all beings…

…where warm, comfortable, and affordable housing is a given…where all beings feel a sense of safety, belonging, and contribution…To these blessings, we say Yes!

Ours is a world where mental/physical health, education, and healthy relationships are ensured by social systems grounded in Integrity, Honesty, and Wholeness…where all beings work and play at whatever feeds their soul and are well compensated for their Service…where authenticity and vulnerability are not only welcomed, but celebrated…where the Peace we cultivate within ourselves shows up as a world free of violence, hatred, or indifference…ours is a world where the Love that we are here to share is given freely to whomever our hearts are called to love…where we have moved beyond all lines of separation, and live as one human family, caring for one beautiful planet with the reverence she deserves. To these blessings, we say Yes!

We recognize that transformation is an on-going process, and especially in times of great change, people benefit from working, playing, and simply being together. And so this Community stands as an open and welcoming place for all who seek support, belonging, and a sense of Family. …it redefines *Church* as a place of Self-Discovery, Authenticity, Kindness, Radical Inclusion, and Love. To these blessings, we say Yes!

It is by the Power of the Great Mystery moving through each one of us that this prayer is acted upon, answered even as it is spoken…Divine Presence, Timing, and Process make it so. And so it is with profound gratitude and great Joy that I release my Word to the One Who Gets It Done…And so it is!…Amen! And for those studying the Upanishads right now, Om, Shanti, Shanti, Shanti!

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…

Can you feel the shift in energy? We have just created a ripple of Peace that has infused all that is and continues to send waves of renewal to all of Creation. And there's nothing anyone can do about it. The deed is done, and I think we're ready to have a ***Conscious Conversation***.

During Taizé, we said that ***Planting seeds of vulnerability*** within ourselves is not for the timid. It means letting go of the defense mechanisms many of us have spent a lifetime

building. It means overriding the ego, which developed as our instinctive drive to survive. The problem is that the ego's original job was to protect us from dangers such as large predatory beasts. When confronted with danger, the ego would send a fight-or-flight message to our limbic system, releasing a flood of adrenaline to increase our energy and alertness, so we could cope with the situation.

But in our modern world, most of us are pretty safe from that kind of danger. These days, what our ego defends us from tends to be more along the lines of embarrassment, criticism, or loss of control: not really life-threatening incidents. Yet we feel like the ego is screaming at us, "You're in danger! You're too vulnerable!" Warning, Will Robinson!

Bottom line, most of the time we are not in serious danger, and the ego is overreacting. Once we remember that, we are able to assess what is really at risk and make a conscious choice to either continue protecting ourself or to allow ourself to be vulnerable. The point is that when we don't allow ourselves to be vulnerable, we are not just protecting ourselves from the bad things that might happen. We are also *protecting* ourselves from the possibility of friendship… of love… of genuine connection with another person. It is only when we let our guard down, when we open our heart *fully* to one another, that the magic of relationship can unfold between and among us.

We closed by acknowledging that vulnerability is not weakness or timidity. It requires great strength and courage to purposefully leave oneself undefended. Human beings are meant to be interconnected in meaningful ways: it is only in relationship that we can see and acknowledge the Divine Light in one another's eyes. We are created to love and serve one another, and to remember who and whose we are. To be our authentic self, we must let our guard down.

So, do we have what we need for a Conscious Conversation? OK, then, here we go.

What does vulnerability mean to you?

What does it *feel like* to be vulnerable?

Brené Brown states that, "Connection is why we're here. It's what gives purpose and meaning to our lives. This is what it's all about."

Does that feel true to you? Why? Why not?

(Humans develop tribes, communities, families, etc.)

Dr. Brown continues: "Vulnerability is the core, the heart, the center of meaningful human experiences."

Is it really true that we cannot live a meaningful life without taking emotional risks?

She goes on, "We need to let ourselves be seen, deeply seen, vulnerably seen; to love with our whole hearts, to be willing to invest our time, energy, and emotions in a new relationship, even though there is no guarantee it will work out?"

Do we *really* have to risk putting ourselves *out there completely* to create meaningful relationships?

Again from Dr. Brown: “Nothing is as uncomfortable, dangerous, or hurtful as standing on the outside looking in and wondering what it would be like if we had the courage to step into the arena.”

Have any of us had that experience? You don’t need to share the gory details, but what did it *feel like*?

(For me it felt like I was an actor in a movie biography of my own life, and I wasn’t the protagonist, didn’t have the lead role.)

Dr. Brown says, “What I think people are asking is: “How much is too much to share about my feelings?” And that always leads me to this very simple sentence: Vulnerability minus boundaries is not vulnerability.”

What do you think about that? What is vulnerability without boundaries?

Here’s what she has to say about that:

> You can say, “I’m really struggling right now. I’ve got some stuff going on and it’s hard, and I wanted y’all to know. And I want you to know that what support looks like for me is that I’ll check in with you if I need something or I may take some time off. Support also looks like being able to bring it up with you when it’s helpful for me but not having to field a lot of questions about it. That’s what I need right now.”

That is a great example of remaining authentic while setting firm boundaries. She authentically shared that she was going through personal difficulties. She set clear boundaries by not disclosing the details. She told her friend what she needs… and what she doesn’t need. Being authentic and vulnerable does require the courage to risk being rejected, but it does not require you to set yourself up to be hurt.

Is there anything else that wants to be spoken right now?

Let’s close in prayer.

In this holy moment I remember and acknowledge that there is only One Life, One Love, One Source of all that is. That One is the Divine Spirit that creates the cosmos by becoming the manifest universe, by pouring Its essence into and through all beings and all things. Each of us is a conduit for this Infinite Creative Power, and so I speak this prayer with the utmost confidence that the Great Mystery that I call God is compelled to respond immediately.

O Divine Beloved, grant us the courage to be completely open, honest, transparent, and vulnerable in our relationships with you, with other people, and with all beings. Help us to surrender the illusion of control of our self-image and simply be who we are created to be. When we lapse into old mental-emotional habits of inauthenticity, remind us of the commitment we are making now, by means of this prayer.

We give thanks that your Divine Guidance is ever available to us, and we listen for it every moment of every day. And we give thanks for every hand and heart that it took to bring food to our table today. May each one be blessed and know that their efforts are a blessing to the world.

With gratitude and humility I release my Word, I lay it on the Divine Altar and perceive everything from this moment on as answered prayer. Thank you, Spirit. And together we say… and so it is. Amen!

Love Offering

Thank you so much for joining us here today. We're going to bring this part of the morning to a close, but before we do, we'd like to invite you to join in the celebration of the work we are doing in the world by sharing of your financial Good, if you choose to do so. If you are at home, you can go to **mysticheart.org** to use our Donate Button or our Venmo qr code. If you prefer the old school approach, you can find our mailing address there as well.

We are an independent, self-supporting organization, and your financial gifts are what make it possible for us to do our work and provide this beautiful and safe space to gather. We thank you in advance for your generous hearts and gifts. We acknowledge and give thanks for the Infinite Abundance of Spirit moving through you.

Offertory Music Video – *If I Were Brave*, by Jana Stanfield

https://youtu.be/ipy9bW-P8dE

Rev. Diana – Blessing for the Offering

Rev. Diana – Invitations

- **The Mystic Heart Book Club is reading *Return to the Sacred: Pathways to Spiritual Awakening*** on Tuesdays from 2-4
- ***Shining Light on Scripture* meets on Wednesdays from 11:30am–1:30pm,** facilitated by Chris Johnson. We are currently reading ***The Upanishads*** translated by Eknath Easwaran.
- ***On Grief and Grieving: Finding the Meaning of Grief Through the Five Stages of Loss,* by Elisabeth Kubler Ross and David Kessler.** Join Rev. Diana on Wednesdays from 2:00-4:00 pm for this powerful book study and support circle.
- ***Fast Track to Wellness* meets on Thursdays from 11:30am – 1:30pm.** This is a body/mind/spirit support circle. We are currently listening to and discussing selections from ***Atomic Habits*** and ***Life in the Fasting Lane***.

Looking Ahead…

- ***Mexican Train Game Day* on April 27th from 1-3:30 pm…**an afternoon of fun and games. Contact Chris Netto by email at (nettowoman@gmail.com).

- **Our Gathering on Sunday, May 3rd will be held at our Retreat location at *The Gathering Place at Shasta Lake*, 18100 O'Brien Inlet Road.** We will Gather around the fire at **8:30 am**, followed by a simple brunch and cleanup.
- ***Back by popular demand…Uniquely You II: Another Jewelry-Making Workshop with Kimberly McIntosh. Saturday, May 16th, 1:00-4:00 pm.*** More details to come. **Payment of $25 is required in advance** to reserve your seat.
- **And finally, our annual Pop-Up Parking Lot Sale will be on May 29th -30th .** Start cleaning out your closets, cupboards, garages, and sheds. We'll be accepting donations soon. We are looking for clean, gently used items of all kinds. And we will be looking for volunteers as the time draws closer. More information to come.

There is more information available on new classes and activities in the April Bulletin.

Information Cards only if new people

Prayer Requests: I am available after service for prayer, in our beautiful Prayer Room or fill out a prayer card and I will get your request to our Prayer Team for daily prayer.

Rev. Diana, Chris, & Marsh – Closing Song

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

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