

Cultivating New Life!

Call to Awareness – 3 Bells

Opening Prayer – Sherri will set the intention to open heart and mind, welcoming whatever is to be awakened today.

Introduction – Rev. Diana

Good morning and Happy Easter, Mystic Heart. My name is Rev. Diana Johnson, Pastor and Spiritual Director of Mystic Heart Spiritual Center. I begin today by welcoming you Home...Home to our Community, and Home to your own Mystic Heart.

This morning, we will use the Taizé style for our Easter Celebration, but a couple of things will be a little different. As always, you are invited to close your eyes and treat this time a community meditation and prayer service. But today, whenever you hear music, there will be a video playing. We will also be adding our Spring Release and Renewal Ceremony toward the end of our meditation, and just before the Celebration.

I invite you now to let go of all that has come before this moment...letting all thoughts and concerns move gently out of your field of awareness. Take a deep breath and allow your body to relax, allowing your chair to fully support you...giving yourself the gift of stillness as you bring your awareness to this time and place...feeling content with what is as you ground yourself in Spirit, here and now...Gently close your eyes to shut out the visual distraction...allow yourself to be carried by the meditative tone of Taizé...feel the words and music wash over you...let yourself be refreshed and renewed by the Light and Love of Spirit...

Chant – *The Garden* by Eddie Watkins, Jr.

Rev. Diana

Our theme for 2021 is *Connection*, and the point of focus for the month of April is *Living Life Full-On*. This morning, we'll be taking a meditative journey into *Cultivating New Life* as we move toward our own authentic expression.

We come together each Sunday for Taizé, a deep and beautiful form of group *Meditation* and *Prayer*. And we complete each service with *Gratitude* and *Joyful Expression*, sharing in the Spiritual Practice of *Celebration*.

Join me in taking another deep breath in, allowing yourself to feel the Presence of New Life moving into and through your body...and then gently breathing out, allowing your body to let go...Breathing in the Aliveness of Spring, and then letting that Life flow out into the world around you, creating an atmosphere of Vibrant Energy, both within and without.

Taking another moment to follow the breath as it settles into its own natural flow... and then slowing the breath down just a little bit more. Now letting your awareness move away from the breath, trusting in the constancy of Spirit as it breathes your body...and turning inward to the Peace, the Love, the Beauty, and the Joy that are forever within you, settling into the eternal nature of your being, where you feel and know your Oneness with the Creative Intelligence of the Universe...where you feel at home in the here and now...as together, we attune ourselves to the high vibration we are co-creating with the Infinite. Feel yourself to be an irreplaceable strand woven into the fabric of Creation, perfectly and intentionally made...you are the very image and likeness of pure Spirit. You are pure Light expressing...

Slipping fully into the flow of meditation, we acknowledge and experience the Radiant Light of Spirit as it glows within us...we recognize and honor the same Light in everyone and everything. There is nowhere that God's Light does not shine. From the *Book of Matthew*, "You are the light of the world...let your light shine."

We take a moment to feel the Oneness of our global community...Sensing a web of consciousness that covers the planet, each of us a radiant point of Light...all beings who in this moment, are drawn to the Presence of the One...the very atmosphere in which we live, move, and have our being. The Holy Dance of Spirit...I in Thou, and Thou in me...inseparable...each bringing completion to the other. (Pause) As we envision all beings, all of creation, joining the web, we see that there are no spaces between us...our web has become the fabric of Life in which we find our place, our purpose, our unique gifts...our Authentic Expression.

Feeling the shared intention that brought us here, there is a deep sense of communion with that which is beyond time and space, beyond definition and description...and we feel the impulse to grow and evolve. As we consciously acknowledge our connection with all of life, our collective Work here is empowered...our collective prayer and meditation leave a positive imprint on the world...on the cosmos...transformation has begun...Wholeness is revealed.

Today is Easter Sunday. It commemorates the Rabbi Jesus's resurrection from the tomb on the 3rd day after his crucifixion. This story hales from the Christian tradition, but it is actually much, much older than that. Historically, the Easter Celebration began in pre-Christian times in England, where a pagan festival was created to celebrate the great Northern goddess Eostre, whose symbol was a rabbit or hare. This festival honored the coming of spring and used the exchange of eggs as a symbol of fertility and rebirth. When in the Council of Nicaea in 325 it was decreed that Easter would be observed by Christians to honor the resurrection of Jesus, Easter eggs came to symbolize the empty tomb of Jesus, from which he resurrected.

The Easter Story comes to us as a retelling of earlier tales. The symbolic story of the death of the son (sun) on a cross (the constellation of the Southern Cross) and his rebirth, overcoming the powers of darkness, was an oft-told story in the ancient world. When we look, we find a number of parallel, resurrected saviors, as well. One of the *oldest* resurrection myths is Egyptian Horus. Born on 25 December, Horus (protector of the ruler of Egypt) and his damaged eye became symbols of life and rebirth. Mithras, the Roman god of friendship, was born on what we now call Christmas day, and his followers celebrated the spring equinox. And so, as an extension of these ancient celebrations, it is easy to see why Easter typically falls on the first Sunday after the first full moon occurring on or after the spring equinox.

The fact that our modern-day Easter has its roots in earlier traditions does not, in any way, lessen its importance or the message it offers. Each day of Holy Week holds guidance for us in our modern world if we can look past Christian dogma to the example Jesus set, to the message he was spreading. Briefly consider...

What if Palm Sunday was actually a peaceful demonstration, staged by Jesus...a way of showing people how to peacefully stand up for what they believed in? That humility is a more powerful stance than forcefulness? There is evidence to show this is true...and that the Roman Cavalry was processing into Jerusalem at the very same time from the opposite direction.

What if Holy Monday was actually another staged demonstration in which Jesus was protesting not the selling of animals in the Temple for sacrifice, but rather the participation of Jewish Priests with Roman leaders in a system of domination that kept the rich rich, and the poor poor? Again, there is evidence...

What if each day of Holy Week gives yet another example of how Jesus was trying to promote peaceful social change, grass roots change, empowered by faith and guided by prayerful communion? What if he was trying to show his people that natural law was always at work, that they could channel and direct it as he did, that seeming miracles were only a matter of faith?

John 14:12 tells us that Jesus spoke to his disciples this way: "Truly, truly, I tell **you**, he who believes in me, the works that I **do**, he will **do** also; and he will **do greater** works than **these**..."

It seems they were not ready to hear...are we?

SILENCE – 2 Minutes – Bell

Rev. Diana

With eyes still closed, join me in going back to 1st century Jerusalem...imagine putting on your Jewish sandals and sitting at the feet of Rabbi Jesus. Jerusalem and its surrounding area were agrarian; so, Jesus lived with and served as Teacher to the peasant class. Of course anyone who worked the soil, grew plants or tended

animals...what we would call farmers, ranchers, and shepherds...were considered peasants. And so, Jesus spoke in parables...metaphors that related to the daily experiences of the people.

It occurs to me that as we speak of *cultivating new life*, we must look at what it means to cultivate. Cultivation is a multi-step process. We begin by breaking up the soil, as with a plow or shovel. In this way we make water, nutrients, and oxygen available in soil that has become compacted. Then we get rid of whatever weeds have taken root, making room for new seeds to be sown. We add nourishment to replenish what has been used up. Then finally, we sow the seeds and tend the plants until they have grown strong enough to stand on their own.

We can use prayer to break up, or interrupt old, rigid, calcified ways of thinking and acting. As we prepare for our Releasing Ceremony, I invite you to call to mind a habitual pattern of thinking or being that is getting in the way of new life unfolding in your experience. Having spiritual community to witness as you commit to letting go of an old pattern is like having help in pulling up a great big weed that was choking out new growth.

All of our past thoughts and experiences serve as nourishment...they lay the ground for our new seeds. But sometimes compost gets kind of stinky...if we're not turning it and working it...practicing forgiveness, non-judgment, surrender, gratitude, compassion. These are some of the ways we work with our past experiences so that they can offer us nourishment and insight moving forward.

Supporting one another in prayer and spending time in group meditation is a powerful way to nourish our new seeds. "Where two or more are gathered in my name, there am I in the midst of them."

Our daily personal prayer is also a powerful tool for transformation. Of course the form that prayer takes is an individual thing. The intention, the conscious connection...that's what is important.

Musical Meditation– *A Shovel is a Prayer* by Carrie Newcomer

Rev. Diana

What if we were to move through life, grounded in the faith that whatever we are looking for is also looking for us? What is it we are we looking for? Greater meaning, Purpose, Peace, Joy, and Compassion? It almost sounds like we're looking for God.

What does it mean to be looking for God and to have God looking for me? Maybe it means that Infinite Intelligence is waiting for me to live the authentic life I was made to live...maybe It is awaiting Its opportunity to live Its full expression in, through and AS me...for me to be all that I might be.

I would like to share with you a reading by James Dillet Freeman. It appeared in the Unity book of *Fasting and Feasting 2020*. The title is *The One We All Might Be*, Part Two.

There was one who showed us what we all might be...What height of fulfillment, what depth of compassion, what breadth of understanding might be ours – if we were all that we might be!

Ours to love with a love that excludes none but gives itself to all.

To have a sense of right values, placing spiritual things first, yet using spiritual powers to transform the physical world.

To be master of self and superior to circumstance.

To be humble of spirit, yet conscious of eternal worth.

To be at peace, yet to be a center of energy.

To be God-centered, a focus through which His power flows freely in joyous achievement.

To be unlimited in vision and to attain what we envision.

To experience the fullness of compassion, yet to live to the fullness of joy.

To be able to help all who turn to us, to bless the lives we touch, to turn sorrow into joy, hate into love, sickness into health, lack into fulfillment, death into life.

To be one with the essential harmony at the center of all things...

This is what we all might be.

SILENCE – 2 Minutes - Bell

Chris – Meditation

Continuing in the contemplative spirit of Taizé, I invite us to think of a garden... What images come to mind? ... Vegetables? ... Flowers? ... Both? ... The vibrant green leaves... the rich brown soil... fruits and flowers of many colors... In the garden we are surrounded by Life... We feel our Oneness with all of Life...

Garden imagery has long been a symbol of Spirituality... The Bible begins in the Garden... Yeshua surrenders in the Garden of Gethsemane... We have images of Zen meditation gardens... Hindu gardens with lotus pools... In the Qur'an, the Garden is a metaphor for Paradise... Siddhartha became the Buddha while sitting under the Bodhi Tree... God's Presence is palpable in the Garden...

Our intentions and feelings have been compared to seeds planted in the Garden of Creativity... Like the fertile soil, Spiritual Law receives our "thought seeds" and draws unto them everything needed to grow them to fulfillment... But like the soil, the Law

cannot distinguish between flower seeds and weed seeds... between our hopeful thoughts and our fearful ones... It simply nurtures all of them...

As we move into the Silence, let us contemplate the quality of the seeds we are planting... Will those seeds grow into the more beautiful life we desire? ... Are we willing to develop the wholesome ideas and weed out the unhealthy ones? ... What New Life shall we cultivate? ...

Silence – 5:00

With deep appreciation for this time “in the Garden” with Spirit and our Beloved Community, we center ourSelves in gratitude. All that our garden produces grows us, as we accept all of our blessings with a grateful heart...

Thank you, God, for everything...

Please affirm with me that our thoughts, words, and actions align with our deepest spiritual intention, and that we are all inspired daily to give full expression to the gifts given us. The light of our souls shines brightly as we express powerful spiritual qualities in the world.

We open now to Rev. Diana’s thoughts, knowing that they are the Divine Fruits of her work in God’s Garden... We accept these Sacred Seeds, planting them into our hearts and minds... watering them with love... pulling the weeds... Cultivating New Life...

Rev. Diana – Invitation to Practice

Continuing with the meditative tone of Taizé...we give our focused attention to the Spiritual Quality of *Light*. As I attend to the Quality of *Light* within me and all around me, I trust that I Am here to shine, and that all I am here to be and to do is coming forth in Spirit’s perfect time. I take a moment to feel the Light within...It fills me to overflowing with Its Power, with Its Love and Its Joy, Its Peace and Its Comfort. I know that as I allow the Light of Spirit to shine through me, I become a channel for Good in the world. I become an instrument of Peace...

Musical Meditation – *Prayer of St. Francis* by James Twyman

Rev. Diana – Moving into Ceremony and Celebration

Let’s take a moment, with eyes still closed, for our Joyful Practice of ***Envisioning a Love-Soaked World***, a world impacted and transformed by all of the good we are doing, individually and collectively...a world that is peaceful, joyful, and kind...where Mother Nature is in perfect balance, respected and nurtured by all beings...where everyone has plenty of nourishing food to eat, a warm and comfortable place to sleep at night, medical care, opportunities for growth, development, and creativity, and a sense of belonging and contribution. A world created by our willingness to practice Radical Love and Compassion, Integrity, Kindness, and Generosity. Let this most amazing Vision bring a smile to your face and a song to your heart ...feel it raising

your vibration...Hold onto the Vision...hold onto the smile...hold onto the Love as you gently bring your awareness back to your body...to your senses...to the atmosphere in the room. As you feel ready, allow your eyes to gently open and take in whatever is before you. Move your body a little bit if you'd like, to reconnect your awareness to our shared space.

Holding a shared Vision is a powerful prayer. Do you truly believe in your heart of hearts that we can bring our Vision to life? I believe it with all that I Am.

Join me in affirming...*We can do this thing...We can do this thing...We can do this thing.* With hearts overflowing, we step into our Release Ceremony with our hearts open wide, willing to begin the cultivation of new life.

We have something for you...it's an Easter Egg. Inside you will find your thought or behavior pattern on a little piece of paper...as well as some chocolate. As soon as you have your egg, pull out the slip of paper and remind yourself of what you have committed to letting go of...some pattern of thinking or behaving that is creating a block in your growth and evolution. If you didn't email me, we have an egg with a blank piece of paper to write on.

If you are joining us on Zoom, I have your Commitments to Release here on our beautiful Prayer Tree. And if you didn't make arrangements, just write down something you are committing to be done with in your life.

As the music plays, and after prayerful consideration, I invite you to walk up and place your commitment of release into the bowl. As you do, set your intention...see whatever it is being carried off by the hand of the Divine...

Musical Meditation – *Into Your Hands*, by Jami Lula

Rev. Diana –

Are you ready to let them go? (POOF!)

How does that feel? Smile...shake it off...I feel free...

Now, with that behind us, we can move into *Resurrection*, into *Renewal*. Unity Founder, Charles Fillmore said this: "The resurrection is the raising up of the whole man – spirit, soul, and body – into the Christ Consciousness of life and wholeness...every time we rise to the realization of eternal, indwelling life, making union with the Father-Mind, the resurrection of Jesus takes place within us. All thoughts of limitation and inevitable obedience to material law are left in the tomb of materiality."

What does this mean? Every time I take the time to connect with my innate Wisdom, I am realigned with my Spiritual Nature. Every opportunity I take to breathe in the Peace of the Divine and breathe out Love, I reveal more of my Christed Self in the world. Every time I remember the Truth of who I Am and why I'm here, and think, speak, and act accordingly, I transcend all that I have been before. I am resurrected

to a new way of living. I move through the world as the Divine Human I was meant to be.

Again, Prayer is our foundation at Mystic Heart. We practice the Possible through Prayer. As we contemplate the story of Jesus rising from the tomb, we see the metaphor for moving past limitation and stepping into Freedom. This day of resurrection, this season of renewal, reminds us that anything is possible...anything is possible.

As you have been sending me your affirmations of Truth, I have taken them into prayer each day. As a means of supporting one another in realigning ourselves with a more Wholesome, more Joyful, more Peaceful, more fulfilling experience, I have created a Living Prayer to share with you now. I invite you to take a deep breath, settle into complete stillness as you watch our *Prayer for Cultivating New Life*. Allow yourself to feel all of the prayers that went into the creation of this Ceremony. Support one another as you share in the affirmations of each one who wrote. And know you are loved...because you are.

Video: *Prayer for Renewal*

Rev. Diana

In the final few minutes of our gathering...together, we continue the Practice of Gratitude and Joyful Expression as a way of celebrating one another in Community. We are so grateful for this joyful and prayerful experience; we feel so absolutely blessed to have loved ones to share our Spiritual Journey with.

We are each contributing to a new story. *Mystic Heart's Beloved Community* is made up of people who are seeking to *be* the Love and the Peace that we desire for all people...learning to be the change we wish to see in the world. to practice Love in order to bring Peace to our world.

I like to share a little bit each week about our philosophy and organization, so that each of us comes to understand who we are and what we're about. *Mystic Heart* is a living, breathing organism...it is an Independent Spiritual Center, self-governed by Community Agreements; free to grow and change according to the needs and desires of its members and friends. By design, it welcomes all who are drawn to be here.

It is open to all faith paths, philosophical points of view, and ways of life that acknowledge and honor the Divine, and support and uplift the growth and evolution of the planet and its beings. We see Evolution and Creation as two aspects of one process that is forever moving life toward its next yet to be, and each of us is an integral part of that process.

We are a community of *Spiritual Independents*. We consider our spiritual lineage to be that of the New Thought Leaders and Transcendentalists; the teachings of the

Master Teacher Jesus and other evolved beings; and the Perennial and Indigenous Wisdom Teachings of ancient times. To make all of this meaningful to life in the 21st century, we are delving into the philosophies of living visionaries, bringing evolutionary spirituality and mysticism into our studies and prayer life. We recognize and celebrate the common Truths that connect all Wisdom traditions; from these we draw principles and practices that are free of dogma and serve as tools for our modern lives.

On this beautiful Easter morning, we have on the altar this morning, our amazing flowers that only four weeks ago, came in as bulbs in pots of soil. We have witnessed the miracle of new life emerging. We know that as we fast from negative thinking in all forms and focus instead on Spiritual Truth, that new life is blossoming in us, as well.

Are we ready to get on with our Celebration? As a community, we celebrate by giving thanks for all of life's blessings. Together, we express our gratitude to God and to one another. This is a vital part of our Spiritual Practice. We view celebration as a holy act, a creative act, an act of worship and devotion to the One Source of all of Life. By celebrating, we feel and express our inherent Joy, which brings more to feel Joyful about! And so, in celebration and deep gratitude, I thank you for joining us this morning for our time of devotion and celebration. It is in community that we come to know who we are.

Rev. Diana – Blessing for the Offering

Each Sunday, we offer you the opportunity to share your financial Good, in support of the Work we are doing in the world. 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 plan for our growth and our monthly spending. I would be happy to give you more information.

As we move into this time of giving, please feel the Truth of these words, and know how much we appreciate your gifts:









As I awaken to the God within me and all around me, I see Abundance everywhere I look. I consciously step into that flow of Abundance by this act of giving. I bless this gift, sending it forth to heal and prosper. It is evidence of my deep faith. It does good work in the world and blesses all of Creation. I give from a consciousness of Abundance! And so it is! Amen!

Don't hesitate to get up and dance.

Offertory Video – *What's Your Gospel Gonna' Be?* by Gary Lynn Floyd & Jami Lula

Rev. Diana – Closing Gratitude and Benediction

Sherri, Prayer Practitioner: Brief Invitations

-  Tuesdays - March 30, 3:00-5:00 pm – *Deep Spirit* by Christian de Quincey - a book club facilitated by Michael Bordeaux.
-  Wednesday, April 7 – 2:00-5:00 pm – Provocative Stories: The Parables of Jesus with Prayer Practitioner Chris Johnson.
-  Thursdays, 3:00-5:00 pm - *Metaphysical Bible*, an on-going circle. BYOB – Bring your own Bible 😊
-  Also on Thursdays, Chris Netto is offering Tai Chi via Zoom. Please contact Chris at standingfirmfitness.com for more information.
-  Selected Saturdays:
-  April 10, 10 am – noon – *Praying in Color...Faith, Fun, and Flowerpots!* A prayerful playshop with Ellie Thompson. Come and learn how to turn prayer into art. **ATTENTION: Bring Your Own Flowerpot**
-  April 24, 11am – 5pm – Mystic OAKS Adventure – Brandy Creek at Whiskeytown Lake, time outdoors with Spiritual Community. Barbecue, storytelling and sing-along. Contact Rev. Diana for more information. *You must RSVP.*
-  Sunday Taizé Meditation Experience, 10:00 am each week.

Keep your eye on our newsletter. Check our website, mysticheart.org, for more information and for all of our Zoom links.

We want to share what we have with others, so please invite folks to check out our website. The power of invitation is one of the ways we grow our community.

Closing Song: *Love Be with You*, written by Lainey Bernstein & Gary Lynn Floyd

Close of Service