

Planting Seeds of Forgiveness...

Call to Awareness – 3 Bells

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



A Beloved Community
Practicing the Possible Through Prayer

Introduction – Rev. Diana

Good morning. My name is Rev. Diana Johnson, Pastor and Spiritual Director of Mystic Heart Spiritual Center, and I welcome you Home to our Beloved Community... and welcome Home to your own Mystic Heart.

This month's theme is *Cycles*, and in continuing to look at the cycle of sowing and reaping, we're giving our attention this morning to *Planting Seeds of Forgiveness*.

So let's settle into the Taizé Meditation Experience...prepare yourself by stilling the body...relaxing into your chair and gently allowing your eyes to close...taking a couple of deep breaths, and tracing the breath all the way down into the belly. And then let it go...releasing all that has come before this moment...breathing in, and breathing out. There is nowhere you need to be, nothing you need to do. Just be here. As your body relaxes, allow the breath to become slow and quiet.

It is in the stillness that we become centered...grounded in the Spirit that dwells within and is always available...solid in the Truth of who we are. Surrendering to the Peace of this moment, we are fully present. We take a moment to acknowledge the body and all that it does for you...your amazing brain, and its capacity for reasoning, and making conscious choices...your emotional body that allows you to feel, to love, to experience gratitude...your intuitive knowing that steers you toward your Highest Ideals and Experiences...and give thanks for the privilege of walking the earth as a human being.

Both human and Divine...Perfectly and Intentionally made...nothing missing...complete just as you are and just as you are not. You and your life are, and have always been, Perfect for your soul's journey.

Together we are *Dropping Down* into the Truth of who we are...

Chant – *Dropping Down* by Karen Drucker

Rev. Diana

Our chanting has shifted the energy in the room...in each one of us...and on the planet as it ripples out...Let's take a moment to acknowledge our Oneness with the global Community... knowing that each of us appears as an individual, and yet we are all of the same Essence and Substance...we are One.

Together we close our eyes for just a moment to envision a web of consciousness that extends in every direction so that it encompasses the earth...each of us a radiant

point of Light...as are all creatures...each and every one expressing Spirit's Light. And we know that it is not only the two-leggeds and four-leggeds, the swimmers and flyers, the creepers and crawlers who give expression to God's Radiant Light, but also the plants, the rocks, the soil, the water...all teeming with Life and Intelligence. We move up into the heavens, and we realize that the clouds, the stars, and the galaxies are made of Divine Light...there is no separation. We are one continuous field of Intelligence...omnipresent...eternal...the Light of Spirit, alive as all of creation.

Recognizing the miracle of our Oneness, we share a heartfelt intention for our time together. We acknowledge our connection with all that is; we accept our responsibility to one another as members of one human family, and as caretakers of the earth; and we begin the deep work of forgiveness wherever it calls to us in our lives, accepting that there is a process at work...we are gentle with ourselves as we begin.

As we share in Spiritual Practice, our collective prayer and meditation are empowered. We leave a positive imprint on the world. We create a ripple of Love and Compassion that leads to great transformation. In the silence, we feel the Power of our collective consciousness...and Wholeness is being revealed.

SILENCE – 2 Minutes – Bell

Rev. Diana

We are *Planting Seeds of Forgiveness*...what does it mean to forgive? It means to *give forward*, to *move on*. So often, we link forgiveness to approving of or condoning another's words or actions...to feeling the need to rekindle relationships...or forgetting that we have been hurt. We fear that if we forgive, we will be taken as a doormat yet again. Forgiveness has nothing to do with any of this. Forgiveness is simply about cutting the chains of blame and judgment that keep us bound, so that we can move on with our lives.

Forgiveness is not something we do for another person...it is something we do for ourselves. We are not freeing another from her natural consequences...Spiritual Law is always at work. When we forgive, we set ourselves free.

Forgiveness of self and others is one of the most important steps I can take toward belonging to myself. Remember that before I can find True Belonging with other people, I have to have a fundamental sense of belonging to myself...a belonging that does not depend on what is going on in the world...that does not depend on the good opinions of other people. In order to have self-agency, I need to be in alignment with what is real for me, in my direct experience, not influenced by external forces.

When I refuse to forgive, I am allowing external forces, people, circumstances, and conditions to bind me. What I fail to realize is that it is a prison of my own making.

The really challenging thing is that we have all experienced situations...childhood trauma, betrayal, deceit...that have left us feeling wounded. We might still be holding onto our hurt...still angry, with no idea how to go about forgiving. And yet, we know it would be best if we could find our way.

And so, we return to a Practice of One-Pointed Meditation...following the breath as it moves deep into the belly, and then back our again...and we notice that it helps us to get in under the wound, to approach it from a different direction.

As I begin to follow the breath, I come into contact with my own thoughts and feelings. As I quietly acknowledge my feelings, the force with which I was reacting begins to dissipate. This lessening of emotional reaction is the first step toward healing.

Musical Meditation – *Silence* by Diana Johnson, performed by D. Fitzgerald

Rev. Diana

What do we really want from our *Planting Seeds of Forgiveness*? We want to feel better. We want to feel free of the pain that has us bound. And we know that if we have to wait to reconcile with every person who has ever wounded or offended us, we will likely have a long journey of suffering ahead of us.

We know that this will never happen, and so it is up to us to begin the self-Practice of releasing ourselves from the dynamic of wanting something from the other person...we begin the process of liberating ourselves so that we can move through our lives in a way that allows us to be as empowered and dignified and at Peace.

Forgiveness is our way of ritualizing permission to move on...it is a liberatory practice that I can use to get myself free of the dynamics of the past, and the fixations on the future....and allow myself to just be present.

What happens if I feel like I'm 80% there where a particular person is concerned, or with forgiving myself for something I have done? What if I can't quite get there yet? What do I do with the other 20%? I just accept it...I allow it to be there. I don't bypass it, or suppress it...I just admit that that is what's True and Real in me right now. That's where I am. And that's okay.

I can hold myself with a sense of kindness, consideration, and compassion. I can recognize the 80% as great progress...acknowledge that the 20% still exists. I'm working on it...and I'm good with that. I make the choice to move forward with things as they are. I set an intention that at some point, the forgiveness will be 100%...I will be completely free of it. But for now, I'm at peace.

Chris – Meditation

Right here and now, we give ourselves fully to this Holy Moment... We focus our rapt attention and our deep intention on this contemplation of Forgiveness... Most of the world's religions teach forgiveness, but what exactly is it? ... Who is forgiveness for? ... How does it work? ... What do I have to *do*? ...

We often find it hard even to say the words, much less actually let go of our feelings of hurt or betrayal... But there is no workaround... no shortcut... the path to forgiveness goes right *through* those very feelings... We must allow ourself to fully *feel* before we can fully *heal*...

It is in this place of intense vulnerability that we may come to a deeper understanding... a knowing that our resentment and bitterness are actually keeping us connected to that person... to that event... We are reliving it over and over again... And finally our heart bids us stop... no more... Let go...

We may never know why they treated us that way... Maybe they didn't even know they hurt us... Perhaps they were in deep pain as well... Maybe they resented us for some unconscious offense on *our* part... In any case, the healing comes with release... Release brings Peace...

The Master Teacher Yeshua of Nazareth taught us that we are forgiven by people in exact proportion as we forgive others... And that God does not forgive because Spirit cannot condemn... I invite us to take these questions into the Silence: "Is there anyone or anything I need to forgive? ... Where and when have I felt victimized in my life? ... How do I release all my resentments and make mySelf truly free?"

Silence – 3:00

In gratitude for the beautiful music that gently guides us back from the Sacred Silence, we give thanks for this experience of Sweet Release... We are grateful for the support of this Beloved Community as we grow through and beyond old hurts... and for the Spirit-given courage to practice true forgiveness...

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 this world.

As Rev. Diana continues her message, we listen with open and receptive minds, and with hearts willing to follow her encouragement and continue Planting Seeds of Forgiveness...

Rev. Diana – Invitation to Practice

There is an amazing power that comes with being at peace with the places in ourselves, and in our lives, that that are not yet as we would like them to be. It is truly to an intention to continue to grow and change, to be doing the Work that will bring the transformation, *and* to be completely okay with the way things are right now. Forgiveness is a process...it takes time. It serves us well to grant ourselves some Grace...to accept where we are, to be grateful for how far we've come, and to consciously place our faith in our ability and willingness to finally put it behind us.

One day we wake up and realize that it's over...there is no more emotion tied to that circumstance, to that person. And we give thanks.

Many a Saint and great Master from the world's traditions has spoken of the need to forgive. Paramahansa Yogananda taught that forgiveness is one of the crown jewels of human qualities. He often said that one of the most glorious acts of Christ was to say, during a time of ultimate suffering, "Father, forgive them for they know not what they do." (Luke 23:34)

When asked why we need to forgive, Yogananda said, "Why forgive one who wrongs you? Because if you angrily strike back you misrepresent your own divine soul nature—you are no better than your offender. But if you manifest spiritual strength you are blessed, and the power of your righteous behavior will also help the other person to overcome his misunderstanding."

It is written that when Rabbi Jesus was approached by Peter, asking "Lord, how many times shall I forgive my brother or sister who sins against me? Up to seven times?" that Jesus answered, "I tell you, not seven times, but seventy times seven." (Matthew 18: 21-22) What did he mean? The number seven is symbolic of Spiritual Completion or Perfection. The number 10 signifies that a new cycle of life has begun. So not only are we to forgive because the offense is over, its time is complete. But in forgiving we are freed to start anew.

Join me in prayer as together we bask in the Presence of the One...recognizing that God is all that is...the One Life, expressing and experiencing Itself as you...as me...and as all of Creation. And in that knowing, there is no room for anything but Peace...Love...Joy...and Freedom. The Qualities of Spirit are inherent...they are mine by Divine Birthright...and I have access to them in any moment that I remember, in any moment that I turn my attention inward and accept them. And when I Am grounded in the Truth of Spirit, there is no room for blame...there is no place for criticism...there is no space for hurt. There is only forgiveness...the letting go of the past, moving forward, into the present moment, and allowing the future to take care of itself.

I take the time that I need to process my emotions, remembering that they are energy in motion. I let it be Graceful...I let it be Easy. I allow them to move through me, moment by moment, taking the time they need, until they have served their purpose. I Am transformed by the process of forgiveness...I Am free.

Musical Meditation – *Let It Be Easy* by Diana Johnson

Rev. Diana – Moving into Ceremony and Celebration

As I let go of what was holding me back, I have come home to myself...and in this returning I find that I can once again find belonging in the world. And so, I expand my heart and extend my prayer now to those in my world.

Together, we envision a world that is Peaceful, Joyful, Abundant, and Free...where all beings practice loving kindness with each other, and care for our planet as we would a cherished Home...acknowledging one another and the earth as Sacred, as Holy. We envision a world where all beings have all that is needed...plenty of nourishing food, the safety and comfort of home, access to medical care, education, healthy relationships, right livelihood, creative contribution, and a sense of belonging...a world in which every being is valued for its inherent Goodness...where the Peace we cultivate and feel within shows up in the world as Radical Love and Compassion, Integrity, Forgiveness, Kindness, and Generosity. Take a moment to bask in the feeling of living in such a world...

We know that our individual lives are enriched by prayer. Our shared Vision is creative. Let this Vision become Real in your heart and mind. Infuse it with your Faith. Carry it with you every moment of every day. There is no lack or limitation in God...there is no reason that we cannot have such a world. Serving as the hands, feet, voice, and heart of God, doing Its work in the world, all things are possible. As we live *from* this Vision, our world is being transformed.

And so, grounded in our deep Faith in the Power of Prayer, I release this prayer from a place of profound Gratitude for the many blessings of this and every day...the transformation that is already underway...and the Love and Support of Spiritual Community. The Power and Intelligence that I call God is moving into action, as is Its Nature, to bring these words into form and experience. I watch in Deep Faith and Joyful Expectation, as together we say...and so it is. Amen!

Rev. Diana

Please repeat after me as together we affirm... *There is Power in our Prayer...There is Power in our Vision...Together, we are changing the world...We are doing it here...We are doing it now... And so it is! Amen!*

We are so grateful to be a part of this Beloved Community. Mystic Heart is an Independent Spiritual Center that is self-governed by Community Agreements, and is free to grow and change according to the needs and desires of its members and friends. If you'd like to know more about our philosophy, we have a full description printed in our monthly bulletin and on our website. Also, I am always happy to answer any questions you may have.

Celebration is a vital part of our Mission and our Spiritual Practice. There is so much good in the world, so many generous people. Today we begin by celebrating all of the amazing folks who serve our fur-babies.

Video - Did You Know? Volunteering at Animal Humane Society

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vUEvPwtm7oU>

Rev. Diana – Blessing for the Offering

Each Sunday, we celebrate our Spiritual Community by sharing our financial Good in support of the Work we are doing in the world. 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 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!




Today's Celebration Music invites us to open our hearts...to celebrate the Goodness of humanity.

Offertory Video – *Humble and Kind* by Tim McGraw



<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=awzNHuGqoMc>

Lucinda & Rev. Diana – Gratitude Prayer

Lucinda Alton, Prayer Practitioner: This Week's Invitations

-  **Tuesdays, 3-5 pm** – an on-going book club facilitated by Michael Bordeaux (Drop-ins always welcome.) A new book will be starting on October 12 – ***Secrets of the Lost Mode of Prayer*** by Gregg Braden. Michael Bordeaux returns as your host! Get your books ordered now!
-  **Wednesdays, 2–5 pm (started October 6)** – *Prayer and Meditation: Part 1 of the Six Pillars of a Spiritual Life*. **This is the last week to sign up.**
-  **Thursdays, 3-5 pm** – *Metaphysical Bible* (on-going, drop-ins always welcome)

Looking Ahead...

-  **Saturday, October 23 – 1:00-6:00 pm** – Self-Guided Tour of the New Clairvaux Abbey and wine tasting. Cost is \$10/person for the tasting. Please rsvp with Rev. Diana. Plan to meet in the front lot of Mystic Heart at 1:00 for carpooling or caravanning.
-  **Reserve your space at the 1st Annual *Be the Change Spring Retreat* at the beautiful Coram Ranch...May 12-14, 2022.** You can reserve your spot with a \$50 non-refundable deposit. Contact Rev. Diana for more information

If you are new with us today, please consider filling out an information card...they are in your bulletins... so that we can reach out.

If you'd like prayer support, we have prayer request cards and envelopes in the backs of your chairs. If you would like to meet with a Prayer Practitioner in person, I am available for a quick prayer after the service. Or contact one of the Mystic Heart Practitioners for a full Session during the week. Our contact information is listed in the bulletin and on our website, as are all of the Mystic Heart events and activities.

To continue the celebration, there is food and fellowship next door immediately following the service. So let's stand and sing our closing song.

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

Close of Service