

*Welcoming the Unexpected*  
*Sunday, January 16, 2022 Taizé*

Rev. Diana Johnson, with Lucinda Alton, RScP  
and Chris Johnson, RScP



A Beloved Community  
Practicing the Possible Through Prayer

**Call to Awareness – 3 Bells**

**Opening Prayer – Lucinda**

**Introduction – Rev. Diana**

Good morning. My name is Rev. Diana Johnson, Pastor and Spiritual Director of Mystic Heart Spiritual Center. Welcome Home to our Beloved Community, and welcome Home to your own Mystic Heart. Let's prepare ourselves to *Welcome the Unexpected* by affirming together, "I open my eyes to see the Spiritual Truth today." "I open my ears to hear the Spiritual Truth today." "I open my heart to receive the Spiritual Truth today."

**Chant – *Blessing to the World***, written by Karen Drucker

**Rev. Diana**

This month we are *Beginning Anew* and today we will be contemplating what it means to *Welcome the Unexpected*.

Let's begin by breathing together...inhaling deeply to rejuvenate body, mind, and spirit...and then exhaling, letting go of any tension that you might be carrying in your body...bringing your attention to the breath...allowing the breath to settle, and to find its own pace and flow...knowing that you are being breathed by the Presence of Spirit...no effort on your part, simply relaxing into this moment and feeling God's Presence as it moves in and out of your body on the breath...allowing yourself to be fully present in this Perfect moment... allowing everything to be exactly as it is, allow yourself to be exactly as you are...Whole, Perfect, Complete, Content...nothing missing, nothing broken...God's Perfect Expression.

Join me in recognizing our ever-present connection with our Global Community...envisioning a web of Consciousness, of Spirit, that encompasses the earth, acknowledging each and every being as a point of God's Radiant Light. We feel our own Radiance, and we sense the same spark in every human...

every single human being, without exception, is an expression of God. We acknowledge all of Nature as part of the web...every creature, every plant, every rock...the sand, soil, and water...the entire planet, down to the smallest microorganism, all shining with the Light of Spirit...teeming with Life and Intelligence.

And now we extend our Vision further still...into the heavens...the clouds, the stars, and the galaxies...and recognize the Divine Light in all of it...and we acknowledge our oneness with this One Eternal and Omnipresent Life.

Taking a moment to feel our Connection, we share a heartfelt intention for our time together. We acknowledge our responsibility to one another as human family, and as caretakers of the earth's animals, plants, and working systems; and we consciously place our faith in Goodness as we learn to *Welcome the Unexpected*.

In setting this prayerful intention, we empower ourselves to see, hear, and feel the Spiritual Truth that our lives unfold in unexpected ways sometimes...sometimes in ways that are filled with Joy and Beauty, and sometimes in ways that challenge us to grow into stronger, more resilient versions of ourselves. And all of it is working for our Good...even when it doesn't feel good.

We are creatures of habit, of comfort, of control. We like to think we know what is coming, what is going to happen next. We feel out of control, and sometimes afraid, when things change in unexpected ways. The Truth is that we never know from one minute to the next where we will be or what will be happening ten minutes from now, much less a week, a month, or a year from now. If we are perfectly honest with ourselves, we know this is true. So rather than working so hard to maintain control of the circumstances in our lives, maybe we can learn to control our experience of the circumstances.

Whenever we feel uncertain or uncomfortable with what is happening, we are at choice. We have the power to stop...breathe...let go...and open to the possibility of Good. Each of us can learn to do this if we are willing. And when we do, we find that we begin to flow more gracefully with the changes that life brings.

**SILENCE – 1 Minute – Bell**

**Rev. Diana**

Barely entering the New Year, the Christmas stories from the Christian Gospels are fresh on our minds. In these stories, we discover many examples of people welcoming the unexpected: Elizabeth, given the gift of a child in her later years, and her husband Zachariah, being told that his wife Elizabeth would give birth to a son; Mary, being visited by an angel and told she would, as a virgin, bear a child, and her bequeathed husband Joseph, facing the humiliation of his beloved's unexpected pregnancy, and then relief when a visiting angel brought reassurance. Each of these people served as examples of learning to welcome and transcend the unexpected.

In the Buddhist tradition, Siddhartha Gautama (the one who would become the Buddha), being raised a Prince and sheltered from the tragedies and difficulties of the world, decided to leave home, to see what the world was really like. He

discovered some unexpected things...that many people live in poverty...that many live with illness...and that people ultimately face death. Believe it or not, it had never occurred to the young Prince that people lived with all manner of suffering. Although challenged by his discoveries, Siddhartha was guided to the state of Buddhahood, of living as a fully awakened human as he learned to welcome and transcend the unexpected.

We may hold these stories as factual truth. We may read them as mythology. Either way, there are great lessons to be learned from such stories. Whether factual or not, the characters point us in the direction of Truth.

When we, like Zachariah, respond to what is happening with doubt or fear, we are stricken dumb...we are stopped in our tracks. But when we, like Elizabeth, accept what is happening, in faith that all is well, life unfolds more gracefully. New life is born by means of us. When we, like Siddhartha, are willing to face things as they really are, with acceptance and equanimity, learning to be in the moment, present to whatever is before us, we can ultimately learn to welcome, and even transcend, the unexpected.

### **SILENCE – 1 Minute – Bell**

#### **Rev. Diana**

Unexpected circumstances can be some of our greatest teachers, if only we remain open to what they have to offer. Learning to accept, and then welcome the unexpected, even when it brings challenge, is only the first step.

What if, rather than working to hold everything in place in our lives, we decided to approach each day with a sense of awe and wonder? What if we started every morning with this question...I wonder what amazing things will happen today? Or this directive...show me the wonder of this day! What if we began the day by looking around us and acknowledging the little miracles that already surround us?

Irish poet William Butler Yeats wrote that, “The world is full of magic things, patiently waiting for our senses to grow sharper.” What if we made a conscious practice of sharpening our senses, of intending to be in awe of even the little things...hot and cold running water, the rising and setting of the sun, the wind blowing through our hair, the bees flying from flower to flower, ensuring the next crop, or even the effortless experience of taking the next breath? It’s all about paying attention to what is before us in every moment...to not getting caught up in the relentless churnings of the mind.

Socrates said that “Wonder is the beginning of Wisdom.” And what is Wisdom? It is a deep knowing that comes by way of experience. Being in a state of wonder has a way of opening the heart to the *experience of what is*.

English author and philosopher GK Chesterton wrote, “What was wonderful about childhood, is that anything in it was a wonder. It was not merely a world full of miracles; it was a miraculous world.” If you think back to when you were five or six years old, there were so many possibilities...you saw becoming a superhero, a ballet dancer, a famous rock and roll singer, or a fairy queen as real options because you lived in a miraculous world where all things were possible.

So, what happened? When did we stop paying attention to the everyday miracles? When did we stop believing in the magic? Why do we fail to see the wonder in our everyday lives? How often do we fail to recognize the Divine in the world around us? Why is it that we no longer consciously welcome the miraculous, the unexpected? To experience wonder is our birthright...it is up to each one of us to reclaim it, to practice being in awe, to welcoming the unexpected...especially in times of challenge and change.

**Musical Meditation – *Make This Moment Shine*, by Charlie Nimovitz**

**Rev. Diana**

In his book *The Alchemist*, Paulo Coelho writes, “When each day is the same as the next, it’s because people fail to recognize the good things that happen in their lives every day that the sun rises.” I’ve heard it said that if we’re not in awe, we’re not paying attention. We are surrounded by, and immersed in, the Beauty, the Abundance, and the Infinite Possibility of Life.

So, what is it that blinds us to the miraculous? Is it that we are so busy with our day-to-day lives that we forget to look around us? Often. Do we move into autopilot, becoming a slave to our habits and routines? Yes. Is it that we allow ourselves to get lost in our judgments and opinions about how others should be living their lives? All too often. Or do we get caught up in regrets about the past, plans for the future, or even fear of what might happen? More often than we’d like to admit, these thoughts and worries cause us to live our lives unconsciously.

I would like to offer some Practices for getting in touch with the miraculous nature of life...before getting out of bed each morning, acknowledge the wondrous nature of life by saying a simple prayer... “Thank you for this amazing day!” Before getting up from your meditation spot, declare your intention: “Today I notice small wonders everywhere.” As you eat your breakfast, wonder how the food becomes your body. As you take your morning walk, or do your morning chores, be present...become curious. “I wonder...” questions are perfect for leading you to witness the everyday miracles that surround you. And as often as you can, remember to say Thank You for the amazing gifts of this and every day...another way to acknowledge small miracles as they arise and fall in your awareness. The best part is, if you dedicate yourself to Practices like these, you will have no time for regret, fear, or judgment.

You will be living in the present moment, in awe of the very process of life unfolding, and *Welcoming the Unexpected*.

### **Chris – Meditation**

Let us enter into this moment in a new way... without any preconceived notions... simply letting it unfold as it will... This is a brand-new moment... we've never experienced one *quite* like it... We may think that we recognize it... it's just like last week... But is it, *really*? ... Look again...

Before she made her transition, Maya Angelou's last tweet was, "This is a wonderful day! I have never seen this one before." ... How often do we see the uniqueness of each new day? ... Are we providing a completely blank canvas for Spirit's new masterpiece? ... or have we filled in some of the picture already? ...

The Law of Expectation tells us that whatever we are looking for, we will find... Our minds seek evidence to validate our expectations... and may ignore – or simply not see – the unexpected... What if we opened our doors of perception wider to allow for more possibilities? ... What if we learn to *expect* the unexpected?...

When our expectation of good is based on what we have already experienced, we limit how much God can bless us... Infinite Divine Mind has to squeeze ItSelf through our human, finite conception of what is possible... This is what Rabbi Yeshua meant by, "For humans it is impossible; but with God, all things are possible."...

Surrendering our expectations is scary... we feel like we lose control... but we cannot lose something we never had... But what if we broaden our expectations to include more than what we've experienced? ... What if we expect to encounter more kindness? ... more Peace? ... more Joy? ... What if we anticipate greater blessings, abundance, and prosperity than ever before? ... *This is truly **Practicing the Possible Through Prayer***...

### **Silence – 3:00**

Allowing the music to gently bring our awareness back into this place and time, we are filled with Gratitude... Grateful for new and greater possibilities for our Life that reach far beyond our imagination... for the Faith that allows us to trust in Divine Love to bring us our Highest Good... Thank you God, for everything...

I invite you to know with me that Spirit is moving powerfully through each of us, and through our Beloved Community... Individually and collectively, we are a powerful spiritual influence on our world... As we evolve in consciousness, the benefits of our growth ripple out, blessing the entire world...

Opening our hearts to a greater good than we have ever before envisioned, we allow Rev. Diana's message to transform us through the renewing of our mind... We allow ourself to expand our consciousness that we may Welcome the Unexpected...

## **Rev. Diana**

Through our Spiritual Practice, we can begin to reprogram our brain's ability to be in wonder, to notice the miraculous nature of even the most mundane things. We can lead ourselves, through our own Practice, to experience Awe in everyday life.

I would like to close out time together this morning with a Practice to stimulate the feeling of Awe in your body. The experience of Awe can take you into yourself and out of yourself at the same time. It carries you away from your own wants and needs...it brings feelings that we can't easily explain. What's amazing is we don't have to go anywhere to experience awe. We can start right here. Let's begin by bringing our attention to the breath...allowing the breath to breathe itself.

Now call to mind a time when you experienced awe...when awe flooded through you...expansive, boundless, immeasurable, both within you and outside of you.

You could live in this moment forever. Slowly and gently bring your hands over your heart. Energetically draw all of the expansiveness you feel into your heart, you're your being. Allow the awe to flow through you...to both settle and ground you to the earth, while simultaneously allowing you to lift up towards the sky. As you sit here, grounded and elevated in awe, I invite you to do one last thing.

Allow yourself to feel awe at something that you're experiencing right now, something you can notice through your senses.

This is your moment of awe...you are expansive...you are infinite...you are boundless...you are immeasurable...feel awe...feel Joy...feel gratitude...feel bliss...feel it all. This is the power of awe...

Filled to overflowing with the awesome Power of Spirit, we join our hearts in prayer. I invite you to take these words as your own, knowing them as the Truth for yourself.

There is only one Power, one Presence, one Life, and I call this one God. It is the Essence, the Substance, and the Process that comes into form and experience as all that is. And so I know that I am that...I am made of God Stuff, because there is nothing else.

Right here and now, in this Holy Moment, I open myself to possibility...I welcome the unexpected as I invite the experience of awe and wonder into my life. I bring my awareness to the many blessings and miracles that support my life, and I give thanks. I renew my commitment to see with new eyes, to hear with new ears, and to feel with an expanded and loving heart. I recognize the miracle of life...that I

am here at all...and I am so grateful. I know that as I ground myself in God's Love and work in cooperation with Spiritual Law, I Am carried by a flow of Grace that Guides and Guards me, Directs and Protects me. Consciously practicing deep faith, I know that all is well...that God's Goodness is always unfolding in my life.

Grateful for the Good in my life, I expand my prayer to encompass all beings...Together, we envision a world that is completely transformed by our individual and collective intention and action, and by our commitment to living prayerfully...a world that is peaceful, abundant, beautiful, and free...where all beings practice loving kindness and treat our planet with care and respect. We envision a world where all needs are met...where all beings have plenty of nourishing food, the safety of a warm and comfortable home, 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 and Light...where the Peace we cultivate and feel within shows up in the world. We feel and know a world without greed, where there is abundance in having *enough*...where every being, as a precious creation of God, is deserving of all the blessings life has to offer. Breathe that in for a moment...

As we consciously place our faith in the consistent givingness of God, offering our heartfelt Vision, the world is changed...shifted...lifted in consciousness...and for this knowing, I give thanks.

I am so grateful for each one who is here today, in community, in communion, in celebration of this beautiful life.

I give thanks for all who came together to make this time of celebration possible.

And I Am profoundly grateful to the One Life that I call God...for all of the blessings of this and every day.

By this act of prayer, *we Welcome the Unexpected*...we practice bringing a sense of awe into every day. We are in awe of the world we know can be. We are in awe of the absolute abundance of Spirit...there is no reason that we cannot have the world that we envision. Serving as the hands, feet, voice, and heart of God, doing Its work in the world, all things are possible.

Knowing the Power of my Holy Word, I release it to the One Power and Intelligence that I call God, giving thanks for Its immediate Action, bringing these words into form and experience, as together we say...and so it is. Amen!

**Musical Meditation – *I Wouldn't Be Surprised*, by Gary Lynn Floyd**

## Rev. Diana – Moving Into Celebration

Please repeat after me as together we affirm... *There is Power in our Prayer...There is Power in our Vision...We are creating a more beautiful and peaceful world...right here and right now... And so it is! Amen!*

It's time for Celebration and Gratitude! I'd like to use our Celebration time this morning to deepen our appreciation for the power of awe.

**Video – Awe** <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8QyVZrV3d3o>

## Rev. Diana – Blessing for the Offering

Each Sunday, we 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. And we are definitely in awe of your generosity.

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, let these words come from your heart, knowing the Power of your word; and please feel our deep appreciation for 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!**

This awe-inspiring representation of humanity offers a powerful message...enjoy!

**Offertory Video – *Humble and Kind***, by Tim McGraw

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

## Gratitude Prayer – Lucinda & Rev. Diana

### Invitations – Lucinda



**Tuesdays, 3-5 pm – Michael Bordeaux's** Book Club. The current book is *Church of the Wild: How Nature* by Victoria Loorz.



**Thursdays, 3-5 pm – *Metaphysical Bible*** led by Prayer Practitioner Chris Johnson. No knowledge of the Bible is necessary. Drop-ins are welcome.



***Dear Self...Another Day of Insight*** Please join Rev. Diana this **Saturday, January 22<sup>nd</sup>** from 10 am to 3 pm for a ***Day Retreat***, designed to



guide you into your Creative Genius. **Please contact Rev. Diana for more information, or to register.**



***Shrink Your Carbon Footprint, Gently Used Treasures Sale!*** Got stuff? Contact Kris Fortier for how you can get involved with our April 30<sup>th</sup> Parking Lot Sale.

*Keep Your Eyes on the weekly announcements... more new activities to come!*

If you'd like prayer support, we have prayer request cards and envelopes on the fireplace, as well. 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**