

# *In the Beginning...*

*Sunday, September 4, 2022*

Rev. Diana Johnson, RScM, with Sherri Dotter, RScP, and Chris Johnson, RScP



A Beloved Community  
Practicing the Possible Through Prayer

## *Taizé*

**Bell – Call to Awareness – 3 Bells**

**Sherri – Opening Prayer**

**Rev. Diana – Introduction...Good morning and welcome**

**Chant – *Beloved* by Chris Johnson (3:00)**

**Rev. Diana**

Feeling the shared vibration that lingers after we have joined our voices, we take a moment to acknowledge our Oneness with our Global Community. Envisioning a web of Consciousness that surrounds and infuses our planet...and accepting that each one of us is a radiant point of Light in that web...noticing that every human no exceptions... that every creature shines with an Infinite Light...every plant...every rock and grain of sand...the soil...the water...and far beyond our planet into the cosmos...all enlivened by the Divine Spark... there are no boundaries, no separation...the Light that *you* are is enmeshed with the Light that *I AM*...with the Light of all beings...with all of creation.

Sensing our oneness, we acknowledge our stewardship...our responsibility to humanity, to all life forms, and to Mother Earth which sustains us all.

Centered in our Oneness, we center our hearts in this month's theme, ***Beloved Community*** and we shift our attention to the title for this morning's Gatherings, ***In the Beginning***.

***In the Beginning***, from the moment of our very first breath, we have been social creatures, born into families that, since early times in history, have banded together into tribes and communities of various forms. Somewhere within our being, we know that we are interdependent. We need one another in order to thrive. Admittedly, some of us are more introverted, needing more quiet alone time, and some are more extroverted and thrive in the company of others.

But we are not created to be isolated beings...we all, in one way or another, need some form of community. In our collectives, we find a sense of belonging, which helps to give our lives purpose. We find meaningful relationships, which provide an outlet for the Joy and Love that are inherently ours; and a channel for the service to which we are ultimately called as we mature emotionally, socially, and spiritually.

In the book of Proverbs, we read, “As Iron sharpens iron, so one person sharpens another.”<sup>1</sup> In one short verse, the most important reason for being in spiritual community presents itself. Being involved with a faith community is an irreplaceable part of my growth and evolution, and of my prayer life. I can spend hours each day in silent, solitary prayer, but without the interactions with other beings in a shared spiritual journey, I miss some very important pieces.

In the Mystic Heart Community, **our Vision Statement is *Practicing the Possible through Prayer***. Let that soak in for a moment.

**Our Mission reads this way: *Living from our Divinity, we empower our lives and create loving and authentic community through study, service, celebration, and prayer.***

So our primary and overarching goal is to live from our Divinity, to live as God-beings in human form on the earth...to live as one who, at every opportunity, asks, “What would Jesus do? What would the Buddha do? What would Krishna do? What would the highest expression of The Ground of All Being look like, as me, now?” And then, to do *that*.

That’s a tall order, so in order to assist us in reaching this goal, we empower ourselves and our lives through study, service, celebration, and prayer.

### **SILENCE – 1 Minute**

We are so blessed to have a Spiritual Community in which to grow, to connect, and to serve. Without such connections, growth can become stagnant as we are exposed to fewer perspectives, and to what can become a limited trajectory for our course of study. We miss the opportunity to see how God shows up as others, and to practice seeing the Divine Spark in *all of it*. This is the Real Practice, after all.

Something within me knows that all of these components of my spiritual journey will be enhanced and empowered by the participation in an authentic and loving spiritual community. I sense that I will find safety and support in difficult times, and friends to share in celebrating the joys of life. I discover others with whom I can speak my heart, listening generously in return, as we share life’s journey. And I find those who will encourage me (and I, them) as we move into a deeper relationship with the Divine.

**Musical Meditation – *I Am Here to Remind You***, written & performed by David Ault

### **Rev. Diana**

While each of us is drawn to study individually, our studies are enhanced by the perspectives of others. Our fellow humans have deep Wisdom to share, and each of us finds opportunities for empathy and compassion as we listen deeply to another. We are grown in understanding and a willingness to co-operate, and to be in Service, as we come to know our shared humanity.

As we mature emotionally, socially, and spiritually, we are called to serve, to make a difference, to leave a bit of ourselves for the next generation. We want to leave the world

a better place than we found it. Contributing to a Spiritual Community is one way to serve. Because of the shared Vision and Mission, and the common interests and worldviews that members of a Beloved Community may share, countless channels and opportunities will likely develop through which your Sacred Service may flow.

### **Chris – Meditation**

In the first chapter of Genesis, Elohim, the Creator, said, “Let us make humankind in our image and our resemblance...”<sup>2</sup> We humans and all of Creation have our origins in the Divine Ground of Being... We are expressions of One Spiritual Essence... we all share the same Life, the same Love, and the same Divine Heritage ...

The other Creation myth, told in the second chapter of Genesis, illustrates a perceived separation between Yahweh and humankind... We can never be truly apart from God... but it *is* possible for us to forget that... When we believe in the misperception of separation, we create experiences that make us feel disconnected from Spirit...

This misperception creates not only the sense of separation from God, but also from other people, Nature, and the rest of Creation... The purpose of the Spiritual Path is to heal that misperception... to bring ourSelf back into alignment with Truth... to experience the Oneness that we thought we lost... to get ourSelf back to the Garden...

Where do we begin? ... How do we “re-connect?” ... God is hiding right in plain sight... in you... in me... in all that is... We heal by looking for and recognizing the Divine in every face... in every plant and animal... in every situation... The Garden of Eden is at hand... right here... right now... But we have to look for it to find it...

As we enter the Sacred Silence, I invite us to contemplate our absolutely indestructible union with Spirit... our abiding connection with one another in Beloved Community... our capacity to support others and be supported by them... the freedom to grow in consciousness in our own way... in our own time... Feel the Unconditional Love in your heart area... Let that feeling expand and extend outwards from you... Feel the Love being extended to you... uniting with your Love to fill the room... and Beyond...

### **Silence – 3:00**

Allowing the music to gently usher our awareness back to this time and place, we give thanks... Grateful for this time of Blessed Communion... Grateful for the support of Spiritual Family... Thank you, God, for everyone and everything...

I invite you to know with me now 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...

As Rev. Diana continues her message this morning, we welcome her inspiration and wisdom... We open our hearts and minds in expanded receptivity to our Divine Nature... we experience our Unity, as we did In the Beginning...

## Rev. Diana

Being in Spiritual Community helps to remind us to count our blessings and offers people of like mind and heart with whom we can celebrate. Together, we can mark the passing of the seasons with our shared Practice, our Prayer, our Rituals and Ceremonies. Together, we can sing and dance in Celebration as one voice, as one joyful presence; we can give thanks and honor the Light within every being as we witness the various forms that Spirit has chosen to take. Our celebration is expanded and uplifted as we share it with others. And our prayer is multiplied... “For where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them.”<sup>3</sup>

As we join our purpose and intention with others, recognizing our Oneness in Spirit, Its Power is magnified in our lives. Spiritual Community can help us, as individuals, to build our faith as we see how God shows up for others. Prayers are offered and answered, and we have the opportunity to witness the Grace of God in action.

We bring the best of ourselves into Spiritual Community, and by doing so, we grow into our best selves. We hold ourselves accountable to one another and to God, as we share this common experience that we call life on earth. And by our choice to share in the journey, we are all showered with countless blessings.

*In the Beginning*, Mystic Heart made the decision to create **Beloved Community**. Many have asked what that means...how is this different than Spiritual or Sacred Community? The term **Beloved Community** comes from the American philosopher Josiah Royce, 1913. He wrote: “My life means nothing, either theoretically or practically, unless I am a member of a community.” Royce observed that, besides the actual communities we experience on a daily basis, there was also an ideal “beloved community made up of all those who would be dedicated fully to the cause of Loyalty, Truth and Reality itself.”

Royce founded the Fellowship of Reconciliation, a movement that was later joined by Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.

In *Facing the Challenge of a New Age*, Dr. King wrote,

But the end is reconciliation; the end is redemption; the end is the creation of a beloved community. It is this type of spirit and this type of love that can transform opposers into friends. It is this kind of understanding and good will that will transform the deep gloom of the old age into the exuberant gladness of the new age. It is this love which will bring about miracles.

Moving this concept into the 21<sup>st</sup> century, Rev. Jim Lockard, in his book **Creating the Beloved Community**, offered this definition: “A **Beloved Community** is a collection of individuals who are learning how to love themselves, one another, and the universe...(finding) the experience of belonging and experiencing the wonders of who we are individually and collectively. It is a place where purpose and passion meet, where

we practice being the person we desire to be and support others in that effort. It is where our faith in spiritual principles is realized as true compassion and service.”

“The ***Beloved Community*** is a strong attractor to those who seek spiritual realization. It is not a place of struggle but of continual progress toward a vision. That progress may have its ups and downs, but there is a sense of forward motion and of being involved in something vital.”

Mystic Heart Spiritual Center is a ***Beloved Community***. It understands and accepts that Life is forever shifting; it nurtures individuals as they explore, evolve, and emerge; it accepts that change is sometimes messy, and disorder must sometimes run its course.

### **Rev. Diana**

At the same time, it serves as a safe space to gather and a welcoming hub of Consistency, Love and Acceptance.

It is so exciting to be part of a spiritual community, both locally and globally, that is actively engaged in the conscious evolution of the planet and of humanity, bravely shining the Light of Spirit into the deepest recesses of our personal and collective shadows.

It is such a privilege to support one another through Study, Practice, Celebration, and Service...to join with a gathering of souls that consciously attends to our thoughts, feelings, words, and actions as each of us approaches relationship with greater respect and Grace. And it is absolutely amazing to realize that anyone, anywhere on the planet, who is engaged in such deep and dedicated soul work, is part of One Community. We are, in fact and in Truth, One.

### **Because there is only the One...(complete the prayer)**

#### **Rev. Diana – Offertory**

It is time for us to close our Taizé Meditation. As we do, we offer the opportunity for you to share of your financial good in support of the work we do should you choose to do so. If you're joining us online, you can find a Donate Button and our mailing address at mysticheart.org. And we thank you in advance for your gifts.

**Offertory Song – *Come, Spirit of God***, written by Daniel Kopp

**Rev. Diana Blessing for the Offering/Announce Coffee, start of next half – designed to add more dimensions and information, 2 halves of 1**

We'll be donating our coffee and lunch donations to ***Farmer's Footprint***.

**Rev. Diana & Chris – Closing Song – *A Soul's Blessing***, written by Chris Johnson

## *Conscious Conversation*

**Bell – Call to Awareness – 3 Bells**

**Sherri – Opening Prayer**

**Rev. Diana & Chris – Opening Music**

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

 **One Big Family**, written by Robin Hackett & Gary Lynn Floyd

 **Chant – We Come Together**, written by Eddie Watkins, Jr.

**Rev. Diana – Good morning/Welcome**

Each week we begin our Conscious Conversation with a ritual...we acknowledge our oneness with all that is and recognize the Power of that Unity. So let's take a nice deep breath in...hold it...and let it go. As we take another breath, let's stand up and embody our Connection with Spirit...embody the Power of Creation...embody the knowing that we are writing a new story for our world. Hold with me the Vision of a **Love-Soaked World**, where Peace, Joy, Abundance, Generosity, Justice, and Freedom are the living principles that guide our lives...where all humans practice loving kindness and Compassion, and care for our planet as the Sacred Home that she is.

We are creating 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 all beings are valued for their inherent Goodness and Light...where the Peace we cultivate within shows up as a world free of hatred or violence.

We are creating a world that knows no greed, where there is abundance in simply having *enough*...where every being deserves and receives all that is needed for a full, rich, and contented life.

In this more conscious and conscientious world, every member of the human family serves as a vessel through which God's blessings flow, and so **there is no reason we cannot have such a world**. We call it forth knowing that it is taking form, right here and now, as we hold and speak our Powerful Vision. Moving forward, we align our actions to support and nurture its Graceful unfolding. We call it Good...we let it be. And so it is! Amen!

Sharing in ritual is a powerful tool for transformation. Another tool we have at our disposal when we set out to create anything new is **Conscious Conversation**.

**Who remembers what a Conscious Conversation is?**

(Deep listening, careful speech, true openness)

This morning our topic has been **In the Beginning**, and in our Taizé Meditation we spent time looking at what it means to be a **Beloved Community**. We said that **In the**

**Beginning**, from the moment of our very first breath, we are social creatures, born into a family that, since early times in history, have banded together into tribes and communities of various forms. Somewhere within our being, we know that we are interdependent. We need one another in order to thrive.

Then we looked at Mystic Heart from its inception... **In the Beginning**, Mystic Heart made the decision to create a **Beloved Community**. This is how we defined it in 2019, after studying

A **Beloved Community** is a collection of individuals who are learning how to love themselves, one another, and the world. We are creating a sense of belonging to something bigger than ourselves. Together we learn to experience amazement and wonder at who we are, individually and as a human family. We practice being the person we *want* to be and support others in doing the same.

Doesn't that sound nice? But I'd like to take our exploration of **Beloved Community** a little bit deeper.

**What comes to mind for you when you hear *Beloved Community*?**

**Would a *Beloved Community* need to be a *Spiritual Community*?** (The way we define it here...people on a spiritual journey, seeking closer relationship to Spirit AND willing to take their spiritual awareness into the world to be examples of love and compassion in action...walking the talk.)

**Will that always happen? Will people in *Beloved Community* always walk the talk? And how would a *Beloved Community* act, what might it do, when someone slips?** (Privately, honestly, and directly approach the one involved; listen; ask questions to uncover needs; offer gentle and compassionate reminders of Community Agreements; offer support for moving forward.)

I mentioned at Taizé that the term **Beloved Community** comes from the American philosopher Josiah Royce, who founded the Fellowship of Reconciliation, a movement that was later joined by Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Both Dr. King and Howard Thurman made use of this term in their writings and teachings.

Fast forward to 2017, Rev. Jim Lockard wrote the book that we studied as we looked for guidance in forming Mystic Heart. I'd like to read a short paragraph from chapter 1 to move us into more conversation:

**Read pages 8-10**

**I'm going to present the qualities he had in mind as questions.**

**What is a consciousness of...compassion? ...love and connection?**

**...deep and radical self-knowledge? ...healing? ...vision?...pioneering?**

**...evolution and emergence? ...mutual support? ...contribution? ...possibility?  
...resiliency?**

## Read page 10

### **Doesn't it sound wonderful? So, what do you suppose might get in the way of such an experience of Community?**

(our own developmental levels, our need for authority, our addiction to form, our limited skill sets, and our own expectations, to name a few.)

## Read page 17

This is where we'll leave Rev. Jim's work for today. We'll be continuing our look at Beloved Community throughout the month. During the Taizé, I shared the Mystic Heart Vision and Mission Statement. I would like to add **our Statement of Purpose**. You might want to close your eyes...

- ♥ to live physically, mentally, emotionally, and spiritually empowered lives...
- ♥ to bring our most authentic selves in Service to others...
- ♥ to honor and experience the Divinity of all beings...
- ♥ to experience the miraculous nature of our world and everything in it...
- ♥ to recognize and live from our Unity...
- ♥ to practice Love in order to bring Peace to our world.

### **We close by anchoring this in prayer.**

#### **Rev. Diana – Affirmation 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.

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. You can find more information on our website.

As we move into this time of giving, hold these words close to your heart 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 offer this gift freely in the spirit of Love, blessing and 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!**


**Offertory Music- *Stand Together* by Faith Rivera and Harold Payne**

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Tnj7usFiwlg>


**Sherri – Blessing for the Offering**





## Sherri – Invitations


 **This Wednesday 3:00-5:00 pm. *The Power of Myth: A Video Discussion Gathering*** with Prayer Practitioner Chris Johnson. Last chance...Drop-ins welcome!


### Mark your calendars now...

 **This Thursday, September 8<sup>th</sup>, 3 – 5 pm, *Metaphysical Bible Study reconvenes*** with Prayer Practitioner, Chris Johnson. Drop-ins welcome. Donations gratefully accepted.

 **Saturday, September 10<sup>th</sup>, 10 am – 1 pm-ish: *Praying in Color...Prayers in the Wind*** with Ellie Thompson. Make a personalized set of prayer flags. Lunch will be included. Suggested donation is \$20. Contact Ellie ahead of time to make your reservation.

 **Tuesdays, 3-5 pm – Michael Bordeaux’s Book Club will be starting up again on Sept 13<sup>th</sup>.** He will begin a light-hearted, thought-provoking, and moving novel, *Breakfast With Buddha* by Roland Merullo. Drop-ins welcome. Donations gratefully accepted.

 **Wednesday, September 14<sup>th</sup> – November 30<sup>th</sup> from 2:00 – 5:00 pm,** Rev. Diana will be offering *Divine Audacity*, the first of her *Conscious Evolution Series*. This class will be offered in-person and on Zoom and is appropriate for anyone wanting to grow! Suggested donation: \$95/or \$10 per class. Contact Rev. Diana to register.

 **Fall Church Family Campout at Sue-Meg State Park. September 24<sup>th</sup> – 27<sup>th</sup>, 2022. Children’s program with Traci included. Today is the last day to sign up. Payment in full is required.** As always, more details are in your bulletin and on our website.

## Prayer Invitation

**Also,** We’ll be contributing our Lunch Donations to *Farmers’ Footprint*, a coalition of farmers, education, doctors, scientists, and business leaders aiming to expose the human and environmental impacts of chemical farming and offer a path forward through regenerative agricultural practices.

## Rev. Diana & Chris – Closing Song:

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

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<sup>1</sup> Proverbs 27:17

<sup>2</sup> Genesis 1:26

<sup>3</sup> Matthew 18:20