

# Building a Bigger Table

Palm Sunday, April 2, 2023

Rev. Diana Johnson, with Sherri Dotter, RScP



A Beloved Community  
Practicing the Possible Through Prayer

## Taizé

### Call to Awareness – 3 Bells

#### Sherri – Opening Prayer

**Rev. Diana** – Welcome...if you're new with us here this morning... my name is Rev. Diana Johnson, and I am the Pastor and Spiritual Director of Mystical Heart Spiritual Center. We are an Interfaith Community that teaches Universal Principles and Practical Spirituality. I welcome you home to our Community, and to the Guidance and Wisdom of your own Mystic Heart. This morning we center our reflections on **Building a Bigger Table**...and we begin our journey by joining our voices, deepening our intimate Connection in Spirit.

#### Rev. Diana & Chris – Chants

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

 **Love, Serve, Remember**, written by John Astin

**Rev. Diana** – Moving more deeply into our meditation, we make a Conscious Connection with the Global Community, gently allowing the eyes to close, and taking a couple of deep breaths...fully arriving...grounding yourself in the here and now...imagine the breath dissolving any distracting thoughts...moving the energy of the mind down into the heart.

Imagine that your heart is beating with the pulsing energy of the One Life, with the Heart of the Mother, with the Heart of the Father...with the Infinite Intelligence living and moving through everything.

And now imagine that your heart is beating with the hearts of all beings...human, other-than-human...and that all of creation is pulsing with this same Life...acknowledging the global web of consciousness that is created as we feel ourselves united by the pulse of Life Itself...sensing the Radiant Light of Spirit that shimmers through all of it.

We feel and know our oneness with All That Is...and we acknowledge our responsibility to one another as human family, and as caretakers of this beautiful and life-giving planet. With every breath, and in every moment, we sense into the Truth of our Oneness, allowing all lines of separation to dissolve as we seek to **Build a Bigger Table**...to envision and create **A Love-Soaked World**.

What do I mean by ***Building a Bigger Table***? First, creating a Spiritual Community where all are welcome, and where all have an equal voice. Then, once we accomplish this in the microcosm, including people from every faith path, philosophical point of view, and way of life that acknowledges the Sacred, we have a model and a set of tools for helping to build a world where people of all ages, races, creeds, ethnicities, sexualities, and abilities can work together, peacefully celebrating our differences and recognizing the strength in our diversity.

Where to begin...we begin with ourselves. We look to the Prayer of St. Francis for guidance:

Lord, make me an instrument of your peace; where there is hatred, let me sow love; where there is injury, pardon; where there is doubt, faith; where there is despair, hope; where there is darkness, light; where there is sadness, joy. O divine Master, grant that I may not so much seek to be consoled as to console, to be understood as to understand. For it is in giving that we receive, it is in pardoning that we are pardoned, and it is in dying that we are born to eternal life. Amen.

When we ask to be made instruments of peace, what we are really asking for is the boundless determination to empty ourselves of every state of mind that disrupts relationships – anger, resentment, jealousy, greed, self-will in any form. Our first priority is to reform ourselves; without that, how can we serve as an example? It is the living example of a man or a woman giving all they have to making love a reality, that moves our hearts to follow.

In this springtime season of new beginnings, and on this day known by many as Palm Sunday, I turn for a moment to the great teacher Yeshua. We look to him as one who set a beautiful example of how to walk peacefully into transformation. His story, whether entirely factual or not, points us toward deep Truth.

Palm Sunday commemorates the day that Jesus entered Jerusalem on the back of a donkey to observe Passover. Some believe that his entering on a donkey was not so much an act of humility as a mocking of the Roman government who were entering the city on horses through the opposite gate. You see, Jesus was a peaceful warrior, a revolutionary, an evolutionary. He wanted desperately to teach the people about Truth, Love, and Spiritual Law. He wanted to set an example of how to stand in one's Spiritual Authority.

After more than 2000 years, Jesus still serves as an amazing example of strength, courage, devotion, and forgiveness...all qualities that we must build in ourselves if we are to contribute to the building of a bigger table and the creation of a love-soaked world.

Sometimes it feels like there's nothing I can do...I am not Jesus. But this was not Yeshua's teaching. He said, "These things and greater shall you do." He taught that each of us has Divine Power at our disposal, and that it is only through our thoughts, words, and actions that the healing of our world can happen.

And so I begin within...I begin in meditation and prayer.

From *The Quest for Prayer*:

There is something comforting about taking time out to commune with a Higher Power...The soul naturally seeks the experience of raising itself to a spiritual level, where it can think and feel from its inner core of divinity. It is these heightened moments which satisfy – which give us the strength to go forward, the joy to warm our hearts, the comfort to ease our sorrows. When human circumstances seem to overwhelm, when we grow frustrated with our lives, confused as to our choices, or mystified at our place in this vast universe, we ultimately turn to prayer. Basically, we pray simply because we cannot do otherwise! Nothing else works.<sup>i</sup>

And from *The Gates of Prayer*:

All things pray, and all things pour forth their souls. The heavens pray, the earth prays, every creature and every living thing. In all life, there is longing. Creation is itself but a longing, a kind of prayer to the Almighty. What are the clouds, the rising and the setting of the sun, the soft radiance of the moon and the gentleness of the night? What are the flashes of the human mind and the storms of the human heart? They are all prayers – the outpouring of boundless longing for God.<sup>ii</sup>

Prayer is not only speaking to the Divine Presence at the heart of creation...it is also an expectation that Guidance will come, and a deep spacious listening that opens the heart and mind to new possibilities. Prayer is a full cycle of communication that leads us to action. Prayer is the starting place for all responsible and effective activism. By going first to our Deepest Wisdom, we engage the Powers of Heaven and the bands of Angels in bringing resolution to our challenges and peace to our world.

### **Chris – Guided Meditation**

We have heard that the Rabbi Yeshua of Nazareth ate with poor people... lepers... prostitutes... and those who collected taxes for the Roman occupation forces... But we often forget that he dined with Pharisees as well...

The Pharisees were critical of Yeshua... They thought him unclean because he healed lepers... the untouchables... And, as society still does today, they judged him by the company he kept...

It took great courage for Yeshua to minister to those on the fringes of society... to risk his reputation as a rabbi in the eyes of the religious elite... But he also modeled radical inclusivity by dining with his harshest critics...

Yeshua's table ministry honored everyone as spiritual equals... as offspring of the Divine... worthy of the same respect and esteem... even those for whom he had hard words always left with their dignity intact<sup>iii</sup>...

Every Sunday we conclude our gatherings by sharing food and fellowship... eating each other's cooking... joining in conversations... Celebrating the truth that we are together by Divine Design... We belong together...

The principle of Unity tells us that we have that same belonging with *all* people... with all of Creation... How inclusive can we be?... Can we zoom out far enough to include everyone?... Even those who disagree with us?...

In these few moments of Sacred Silence, let us contemplate our own individual table ministries... Are we as inclusive as we would like to think we are?... Who might we be excluding?... How can we welcome them in?...

### **Silence – 3:00**

Expanding our table... acting on our intention to include more of the vast diversity of humankind into our lives requires great courage...

It takes a willingness to listen from our hearts... to suspend judgment... to celebrate and value our differences while finding the common ground we share...

We all have the same needs... to be seen... to be heard... to be acknowledged as a valuable member of the human race...

And so we give thanks for the courage to extend those gifts to others... with no guarantees... and for the faith that our own needs will be met in return...

As Taizé continues, we welcome Rev. Diana's inspiration and wisdom... And we bring it into our world by *Building a Bigger Table*...

### **Rev. Diana**

Last week we spoke of ***Coming Home***... ***Coming Home*** to our hearts, ***Coming Home*** to God. But I invite us to remember that first, we must come home to who we truly are. Human beings are inherently peaceful, generous, welcoming creatures who thrive on belonging. Our native language is Love. We are built for such a time as this...for such a great transformation.


***Building a Bigger Table*** comes naturally to us when we live from *that* Truth...when we consciously place our faith in ourselves, in one another, and in the Creative Intelligence of the Universe.

Will there be work involved? Of course there will...there always is. Great things are not built without effort, time, and dedication. But will it be worth it? Of course it will. Besides, what other options do we have?

Before we can become effective agents for positive change in the world, we must begin within. Spend some time this week in contemplation...Which aspect of my humanity most often gets in the way of my living from Truth, from Goodness, Love and Light? No matter which thought or behavior pattern most often blocks your ability to shine your light into the world, it is rooted in fear. What are you afraid of? The unknown? Your sense of powerlessness? Your own Power? Seek to know the Truth...you are a child of the

Universe, a perfect and intentional, irreplaceable creation of the one Infinite Intelligence. You are here on purpose, for a purpose...no exceptions.

## **Musical Meditation**

 **Circle of Fire Prayer**, written by Cari Cole & Don Miguel Ruiz; performed by Cari Cole

## **Closing Prayer – We close our meditation this morning with a *Prayer for Truth* from Don Miguel Ruiz of the Toltec tradition:**

Today, Creator I ask you to open my eyes and open my heart so that I can recover the truth about my life. Help me to resist the temptation to believe the lies that repress the expression of my life and my love. Give me the strength to resist the temptation to believe the lies of others that only create emotional poison in my heart.

Today, Creator, let me see what is, not what I want to see. Let me hear what is, not what I want to hear. Help me to recover my awareness so that I can see you in everything I perceive with my eyes, with my ears, with all my senses. Let me perceive with eyes of love so that I find you wherever I go and see you in everything you create. Help me to see you in every cell of my body, in every emotion of my mind, in every person I meet. Let me see you in the rain, in the flowers, in the water, in the fire, in the animals, and in the butterflies. You are everywhere, and I am one with you. Let me be aware of this truth.

Today. Let everything I do and say be an expression of the beauty in my heart. Let me be aware of the beauty and perfection in everything you create, so that I can live in eternal love with you. Thank you, Creator, for the power to create a dream of heaven where everything is possible. Beginning today, I will use the power of my love to create a masterpiece of art – my own life.

And so it is...Amen...Sathu...Ashay...Aho!

Coming back into this space, we open our eyes, our hearts, and our minds. Take a look at who is here celebrating with you this morning. This is your Spiritual Family...one of your support systems. These are some of the people who care about you, who are there for you if you need anything.

## **Rev. Diana – Offertory**

As we close our Taizé Meditation, 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](http://mysticheart.org). And we thank you in advance for your gifts.

We feature another short video from the folks at Kiss the Ground...

## **Offertory Video–**

## **5 Ways to Make Your Garden Regenerative**

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kK6NrUmrV4A>

### **Rev. Diana – Blessing for the Offering**

**Closing remarks – still supporting Farmers' Footprint with lunch donations – check your bulletin or the website for activities coming up – please consider spending a service now and again with Traci and the kids. She has sign-ups next door.**

### **Rev. Diana & Chris Closing Song**

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

## *Conscious Conversation*

### **Call to Awareness – 3 Bells**

### **Sherri – Opening Prayer**

**Rev. Diana – Welcome...**if you're new with us here this morning... my name is Rev. Diana Johnson, and I am the Pastor and Spiritual Director of Mystical Heart Spiritual Center. We are an Interfaith Community that teaches Universal Principles and Practical Spirituality. I welcome you home to our Community, and to the Guidance and Wisdom of your own Mystic Heart. This morning we center our Conversation on ***Building a Bigger Table***.

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

### **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

 ***Song – How Can I Serve?*** written by Rickie Byars

### **Rev. Diana**

I invite you to remain standing and take a moment to feel the Presence of Spirit in your body...the Life moving through...the Love filling you up...and join me in our Sacred Practice of Visioning for a ***Love-Soaked World***.

...where all humans are embodying and living from Peace, Joy, Abundance, Generosity, Justice, and Freedom as Living Principles that guide our lives...where all humans practice Loving Kindness and Compassion, honoring and caring for one another, and for our beautiful 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...

...where mental/physical health, education, and healthy relationships are ensured by social systems grounded in Wellness and Wholeness... where right livelihood, creative contribution, and a sense of belonging are known as Gifts of the Spirit and experienced by all...

A world in which all beings are valued and respected 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 having *enough*...where every being *deserves* and *receives* all that is needed for a full, rich, and contented life.

In this new world of our creation, every person is a caring and conscious vessel through which Generosity flows. By the Power of our collective intention, we write a new story...we create a world that works for all beings. We know that our Good Work is bearing fruit. We *will not* lower our Vision, no matter the appearance, knowing with our whole hearts that such a world is not only possible, but *inevitable*. It is coming into being now...and we trust that this prayer is an integral part of its Graceful unfolding.

We open our hearts, our doors, and our arms in Radical Welcome, erasing all lines of apparent separation. We create an open and loving community to which all are invited, and *in* which all have an equal voice. Our Powerful Vision is moving into form and experience here and now, and so we simply let it go and let it be. And so it is...Amen...Sathu...Ashay...Aho!

Let's take a moment to look around and notice who is sharing this space with you this morning. This is one of your support systems, your Spiritual Family should you choose it.

Our theme for the month is ***Creating a Love-Soaked World***. During the Taizé this morning we spent time reflecting on the role of prayer in our lives, and in the creation of a new story. And we talked about how prayer is a complete cycle of communication with Spirit, perhaps speaking, asking, or setting an intention, and then listening deeply for a response from within. And we agreed that prayer is only the first step...that once we have heard what is ours to do, we have to do it. Prayer is meant to move us to action. Let's have a conversation...

**When I say that *Building a Bigger Table* is part of *Creating a Love-Soaked World*, what does that mean to you? What does it mean to build a bigger table?**

(Creating a space, a world, where everyone is welcome, just as they are, and everyone has an equal voice; no one is excluded)

**What stories did you grow up with? In other words, what were some of the assumptions that were accepted as truth in your family or community?**

For example, “My family loved me and took care of me...home was safe” or “I had to earn my parent’s love...home was not always a safe place;” stories of God’s goodness or not; stories about people who were different from us.

**Read A Bigger Table, pages 4-6.**

**Does any of that sound familiar to anyone? Let’s talk about it.**

**What are the dominant themes in the stories of our culture, the stories we have been raised with?** (lack, limitation/there’s not enough; competition; materialism; Separation)

**Read A Bigger Table, pages 25-26.**

So many people have had experiences like this. This is why people hesitate to become involved in spiritual communities. **Does this sound familiar to anyone?**

This is why everything we do here is focused on integrity, authenticity, radical welcome, and unconditional love. Everything from our shared agreements to our Vision, Mission, and Purpose statements point us toward becoming physically, mentally, emotionally, and spiritually healthy people. We support one another as we learn to walk the talk.

During Taizé, we looked at the Rabbi Yeshua as a beautiful example of how to walk peacefully into transformation...that his story, whether entirely factual or not, points us toward deep Truth.

Today is Palm Sunday in the Christian Tradition. It commemorates the day that Jesus entered Jerusalem on the back of a donkey to observe Passover. Some see his entering on a donkey as an act of humility and others believe that he was mocking the Roman government who were entering the city on horses through the opposite gate. We acknowledged Jesus as a peaceful warrior, a revolutionary, and an evolutionary. He wanted desperately to teach the people about Truth, Love, and Spiritual Law. He wanted to set an example of how to stand in one’s Spiritual Authority.

**So why do we call it Palm Sunday?**

(the citizens laid down palm fronds in the street where Jesus entered)

**Why palm fronds?** (This was a customary way of welcoming and honoring a king...they expected Jesus to become their new political and spiritual king, to save them from both the Roman government and the crooked priests)

Jesus never made such claims...the people clearly had a set of expectations. But he knew that his purpose was to raise the bar...to lift the people’s sights from living according to manmade laws to living from a Higher standard of Truth. They expected what he could not give, and he came to teach what they could not yet understand. He was doomed from the start. This is what led to his crucifixion. Sound familiar?

**Has anyone had a similar experience? People placing their expectations on you...and missing the gifts you actually have to share? Is there somewhere in your life that it’s still happening?**



I believe that Jesus was way ahead of his time. He came to show us a different way to live, a way that we're still struggling to grow into over 2000 years later. He was an expert at **Building a Bigger Table**...beyond inclusive, he welcomed everyone from prostitutes, to lepers, to tax collectors...yes, even tax collectors.

The story of Easter, if taken for its symbolic value, is perfect for our time. It points to the need for a new paradigm. It speaks of the death of an old way of life, and the rising up of the human spirit to meet the current times. It invites us to put our stories of separation to rest, and to step into a new age...one in which compassion, generosity, and cooperation lead us into lives of Wholeness and Unity. And it reminds us that transformation is an on-going process.

**Closing Prayer:** Let's anchor what we know in prayer...

There is one Eternal Life, forever expressing as all of creation. Each of us is an individualized expression of that Life. Individualized...meaning that we are separate in apparent expression only...that we cannot be divided from our Source, or from one another.

We know that Life is change, and that we are not exempt from growth and expansion. It is part of our nature. We know that old ways must die out before new, more holistic patterns and behaviors can be nurtured and developed. And so, here, and now, we commit to letting go of all that no longer serves us. We let go of all expectations, allowing Spirit's Infinite Wisdom and Intelligence to guide our lives. And in the letting go, we are freed from limitations of every kind. Our thoughts, words, and actions are aligned with the Original Goodness we were born into. And all is well.

I release this prayer, trusting in the Power of Holy Language to set a new course, to create a new mold, a new story for my life and for the life of the planet...I let it be...and so it is...Amen...Sathu...Ashay...Aho!

Welcome back! Feeling good?

### **Affirmation for the Offering**

It's time to close our service this morning so that we can move into Food and Fellowship. As we prepare to wrap it up, we invite you to join in the celebration of the work we are doing in the world by sharing of your financial Good.

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 Video – *Bigger Table*, written & performed by Matt Maher



[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QpK\\_nrPrRG8](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QpK_nrPrRG8)

Sherri – Blessing for the Offering

## Invitations

-  **Michael Bordeaux** and the **Mystic Heart Book Club** is reading *Dinner with Buddha* this Tuesday from 3-5 pm. We listen and discuss, so no book needed.
-  **Kavalya Poirier** is offering **Functional Movement through Yoga** on Thursdays, 11 am – 12:15 pm. She is asking for a month-by-month commitment and is offering a sliding scale of \$40-60 for the month of April. Check the bulletin or our website for more information.
-  **Fast Track to Wellness** with Rev. Diana meets on Thursdays from **12:30 – 2:30** pm. This is a physical health and wholeness support circle. Drop-ins are welcome.
-  **Metaphysical Bible Study** with Chris Johnson meets on Thursdays from 3:00 – 5:00 pm. Drop-ins are welcome.
-  **Please sign up with Traci to assist with the Junior Mystics once every 4-8 weeks. She has the sign-up sheet next door...many hands make light work.**
-  **Sunday, April 9<sup>th</sup> – Easter Sunday Release and Renewal Ceremony – 10:00-11:30, a single service for this week only.**

## Looking Ahead...

-  **2<sup>nd</sup> Annual Spring Retreat at Coram Ranch in Shasta Lake** April 20-23, 2023. Rev. Diana will be in touch this week regarding payments due, stuff to bring, arrival/departure times, etc. Sunday Service will be held at Coram with **no gathering here on-site**. If you're not attending the retreat and would like to come to Church in the Wild, you must let Rev. Diana know. **The guard will not let you cross the dam unless your name is at the gate.**
-  **Friday, April 28<sup>th</sup> from 1:00 – 4:30 pm** – Calling All Who Are Willing and Able...Join Rev. Diana in preparing giveaways for our summer booths. Help put together seed packets, cut bookmarks, create Sweet Affirmations, fold flyers...everything will be provided. We just need your hands and hearts!

## Mark Your Calendars Now...

-  **Friday, May 19<sup>th</sup>, 6:00-9:00 pm, Our Annual State of the Heart Gathering.** More information will be available soon.

## Prayer Requests, Practitioner available after service, Information Cards if new people

### Rev. Diana & Chris – Closing Song

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

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<sup>i</sup> Richard Jafolla and Mary-Alice Jafolla, *The Quest for Prayer: Coming Home to Spirit*

<sup>ii</sup> Central Conference of American Rabbis, *Gates of Prayer: The New Union Prayer Book*

<sup>iii</sup> John Pavlovitz, *A Bigger Table*