

My Place at the Table

April 30, 2023



A Beloved Community
Practicing the Possible Through Prayer

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

Taizé

Call to Awareness – 3 Bells

Lucinda – Opening Prayer

Chris – Welcome, and Good morning, I am Chris Johnson, Prayer Practitioner here at Mystic Heart Spiritual Center, and I would like to welcome you home... To our Beloved Community, and home to your own Mystic Heart – your own personal Source of Divine Wisdom.

Our theme for this month is ***Creating a Love-Soaked World***, and we have used the metaphor of sharing a meal to illustrate how we might expand how we welcome people into our lives so that no one is excluded.

We begin our meditative journey this morning by joining our voices in musical prayer as we chant together.

Taizé Chants

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

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

Chris – If you are comfortable doing so, I invite you to gently close your eyes and take a few deep breaths... Allow all that has come before this moment to fade away and center your awareness in this moment. Here and now, we enter into the presence of our Beloved Community, and into the Divine Presence...

Now take a moment to expand your awareness to those around you... each one a spark of Light in the Global Web of Consciousness... Now spiral out to include family and friends... neighbors... all in our city... our county... our state... the world... Connected by Spirit, we celebrate our Oneness with all of humanity... with all of creation... We see all the animals... plants... soil... water... air... planets, stars, and galaxies shining with the same Divine Light that we are... One Spirit... One Life, expressing in infinite variety...

I invite you now to remain grounded in the Truth of Who and Whose we are, as together we find ***Our Place at the Table***.

We have been talking about our need to Build a Bigger Table... a framework large enough to include our whole human family. The table is where we share food and conversation and celebrate our common heritage as family and friends. The metaphor of the dinner table is representative of our relationship with everyone and with all that is...

As developing mystics on the path to greater awareness, we accept and know our oneness with all that is... the four-leggeds, the two-legged, the finned, the winged, plants, rocks, soil, water, air... all alive and tingling with consciousness. This principle of Unity demands that we include all of Creation as Family and welcome them to the table.

Traditionally, the householder sits at the head of the table. The head of the table is a position of power and privilege. In medieval times, a container of salt was placed in the middle of the long feasting table. The King or Lord sat at the head of the table, and family and honored guests sat "above the salt," closer to the royalty. The servants and less distinguished guests sat "below the salt." Your place at the table was strictly defined.

So, where is my place at the table? Do I sit above the salt? ... below? I am reminded of the Legend of King Arthur. He desired that he and all of his noble knights have an equal voice in all decisions. That is how they settled on a round table for their discussions. There was no head, no one above or below the salt, nobody held a position of greater or lesser power, honor, privilege, or importance. If there is to be true equity, my seat at the table must be among the other expressions of Spirit present, in between two of my Divine Siblings...

What does this radical egalitarianism require of us? Some of us were born into a life of privilege because our skin color, gender identity, and sexual orientation aligned with some unwritten norm. Although we don't necessarily *feel* privileged, we still may unconsciously act or speak from that perspective. So radical egalitarianism requires that we "humble up" and be vigilant with our thoughts, words, and actions. And if we slip up, we must admit it, own our mistake, and apologize for our carelessness.

Those of us not privileged by accident of birth may have work to do as well in order to be comfortable at this bigger table. After years of tokenism and superficial inclusion, we may be suspicious about how welcome we really are. That suspicion can block the flow of true communication, compassion, and acceptance between us. That which protects us against hatred also protects us from love.

Whether we are privileged or marginalized, radical egalitarianism requires that we overcome our fear and allow ourselves to be vulnerable. It requires that we listen generously from our hearts, genuinely open to new understanding. We must suspend our opinions, judgments, and reactivity so that we may hear

beyond the words and get a glimpse of one another's essence. We must have such a solid knowing of our Divine Oneness that no difference of opinion can cause us to feel separated. Ever.

Musical Meditation: *One Heart*, by Gary Lynn Floyd

Chris – Such a beautiful lyric:

Together we can make a difference in our world
Every creed and color, every boy and girl
All of Creation - no separation - we are one - One Heart
Even though it seems we are so far apart
And many times we're feeling all alone
The Truth of who we are has been here from the start
We are One Heart

Rev. Diana – Guided Meditation

The Zulu tribe of South Africa has a word to acknowledge this deep sense of equality and respect...the word is Sawubona. It means I see you...my tribe and all our ancestors see your tribe and your ancestors...

It means I value all of who you are...your virtues, nuances, and flaws. I am fully present with you. I allow myself to discover your needs, see your fears, identify your mistakes, and accept them.

Sawubona reminds me to see others without prejudice and to leave grudges behind. It doesn't stop at inclusion. Inclusion and belonging are not the same thing.

Inclusion says, "You may join our group as long as you abide by the agreements, structures, and rules that are already in place." This is not belonging.

Belonging gives each of us an equal voice, equal value, and equal agency. True Belonging is when our full humanity as individuals, and as groups, is embraced.

In these few moments of silence, let us contemplate those who are important to us... do we see one another in this profound way?... And let us ponder, "Why are we here at the same time? What has this moment of time given us?"

Silence – 3:00

Sawubona speaks of embracing another person's soul, of seeing the Wholeness behind another's shadow. It means " I see myself in your eyes."

It acknowledges our common membership in the human family and invites us to participate in one another's lives.

Seeing implies the question, “How do I have to be for you to be free?” If I limit one person’s freedom, I limit my own.

It is my prayer that each of us approaches the apparent other, and our world in general, with the spirit of Sawubona...

That we acknowledge our Oneness...we belong together, all of us. No exceptions.

Chris

So, how do we remember our Oneness with others in our daily life? How do we break through the illusion of separation and see the essence of one another... the Christ within? How do we live Namasté?

We may start with a regular practice of meditation and prayer, in which we contemplate the Unity of all Life, and then pray for guidance to “keep fresh before us the moments of our high resolve.”¹ But then we need to take that commitment out into the streets. If Unity does not show up as the foundation of every interaction we have with other beings, we have work to do.

The Human Family is being called into a new way of being on the earth and with one another. The infinite diversity of Creation is more than merely variety. It is a sacred dimension that we should approach with awe and great respect. It is a lifelong exploration of what it means to be a human being.

The Hebrew prophet Micah reminded us that we already know what we need to do. In chapter 6, verse 8, he says, “He has already shown you what is good. What does Yahweh require of you? Act justly, love mercy, and walk humbly with your God.” As we work together as the hands and hearts of Spirit, let us always remember who and Whose we are. Let us be guided into establishing social justice, compassion, forgiveness, and humility as a core value in our world. Let all that we do help to establish the *More Beautiful World Our Hearts Know is Possible*;² a *Love-Soaked World*.

Prayer – We close our Taizé this morning with a Cheyenne Prayer adapted from Henrietta Mann

Grandfather Sacred Above – Grandmother Sacred Below.

Creator, God.

You, who are known by many names,

Thank you for this sacred morning, for this gathering, for this food and water, and for your guidance.

As the humble, upright two-legged walkers with five fingers—

Thank you for the divine, the holy that is within each of us, your four-human children, from each of the four sacred directions of this good Earth.

Thank you for the sacred breath of life.

Thank you for the power of good-heartedness and spirit-centeredness.

Thank you for good minds and speech.

Thank you for your great gift of sight and vision so that we can see the beauty of life AND the beloved in each other.

Ma'heo'o with humility, I ask you to encircle each of us with all that is good, especially with respect, compassion, understanding, and joy.

Shield all who stand here before you with the power that is love and the strength of gentleness in their sacred commitment to educating the beloved and precious children of this sacred red earth.

Fulfill their vision of re-creating a strong and compassionate human community that understands the kinship of life.

Bless all my relations who have come to this ceremony so that in all their days on earth they will walk in beauty and with honor.

Ma'heo'o, bless all my relations with grace and the ability to forgive.

Comfort and wipe the tears of all those who are in sorrow.

Fill their hearts and minds with serenity and hope.

Guide our hearts with compassionate and wise spiritual direction—

So that we can think love and be love.

So that we can think peace and be peace.

Nehse³ (nesh)

Knowing the power and truth of these sacred words, we give thanks. Thanks for the courage to stand humbly and vulnerably in this world... for the unwavering resolution to interact authentically and compassionately with our Divine Siblings. We are grateful for reminders from Spirit that we are one heart, one family, one God expressing through and as all of Creation.

Centered in Unity, I release this prayer knowing that it continues to work in and through each of us.

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

I invite you to bring your awareness back into this space, open your eyes, and take a look at who is here celebrating with you this morning. This is your Spiritual Family... your Beloved Community. These are some of the people who care about you, who are there for you if you need anything.

Chris – 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. And we thank you in advance for your gifts.

As we pass the basket, I'd like to share this video from Rev. John Pavlovitz, author of ***A Bigger Table: Building Messy, Authentic, and Hopeful Spiritual Communities***

Offertory Video– John Pavlovitz: *I'm the Humane Middle*

<https://youtu.be/A2lxlgLTL2s>

Lucinda – Blessing for the Offering

Chris – 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.

Taizé Closing Song

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

Conscious Conversation

Call to Awareness – 3 Bells

Opening Prayer – Lucinda

Chris – Welcome, and Good morning, I am Chris Johnson, Prayer Practitioner here at Mystic Heart Spiritual Center. We are an Independent Interfaith Community that teaches Universal Principles and Practical Spirituality. We welcome you home to your Spiritual Community (should you choose it), and home to the Guidance and Wisdom of your own Mystic Heart.

This morning we center our ***Conscious Conversation*** on finding ***My Place at the Table*** as we share in the human experience.

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

Opening Music

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

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

 ***Song – We Shall Be Known***, written by Karisha Longaker of Ma Muse

Chris

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... Grounded to Mother Earth, Centered in our awareness of ourselves as instruments of the One Creator, we focus on our heartfelt desire to establish a Love-Soaked World... A world characterized by peace, love, generosity, compassion, and freedom... A world in which poverty, hunger, homelessness, violence, fear, and greed are things of the past... Where all have access to medical care, education, a comfortable home, and creative expression... A world where healthy relationships, dignified work, and a sense of belonging are universal...

As we live and act from our highest intentions, we create a world where all people, animals, plants, and Mother Earth herself are valued as Sacred Creation... A world in which God's unlimited abundance is allowed to flow freely to all... Where all are recognized as deserving of all the blessings Life has to offer and are free to receive them gratefully.

God is a Spirit... No feet... no hands... no hearts but ours... As we work together to be the change we wish to see, there is no reason we cannot have such a world... Knowing that nothing can stop a Divine Idea whose time has come, we join together in consciousness, in prayer, and in service to the creation of Heaven on Earth...

As we speak our Powerful Word of creation, we affirm that our Vision is taking form here and now. We accept it... we release it... we let it be so... And so it is... Aho... Sathu... Amen.

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.

At Taizé this morning, we continued our metaphor of *Building the Bigger Table* by asking, "OK, where do I sit?" We explored the power, prestige, and privilege that simply sitting at the head of the table signifies.

How does that kind of privilege fit into a Love-Soaked World?

(it doesn't) **Why not?**

We talked about true equity – I referred to it as Radical Egalitarianism.

So what does this radical egalitarianism require of us?

(humility, willingness to give up or at least share our privilege [if we have it] or release resentment of those who do [if we don't], release our opinions & judgments, to overcome our fear of vulnerability so we can be authentic, deep & generous listening from heart to heart)

What about when we make mistakes by acting unconsciously?

(admit the mistake, own our behavior, and apologize – clean up the mess)

So, how do we remember our Oneness with others in our daily life? How do we live Namasté?

(meditate, pray for guidance & reminders, practice, practice, practice!)

How can we know if we are actually living from Radical Egalitarianism?

(staying mindful in our interactions, carefully watching other people's responses to us)

How many opportunities each day do we have to practice Radical Egalitarianism?

(potentially a full-time job)

How many of us actually go out and look for opportunities to connect this way? What do you do?

Read Albert Einstein quote, *Dhammapada*, p.38

Read *A Bigger Table*, p.163-164

Let's take a moment to center ourselves in that deep authenticity.

Closing Prayer: This prayer comes to us from the Lakota Sioux tradition:

Wakan Tanka,
Great Mystery, Great Spirit,
Teach me how to trust my heart,
Teach me how to trust my mind,
Teach me how to trust my intuition,

Teach me how to trust my inner knowing,
The senses of my body,
The blessings of my spirit.

Teach me to trust these things
so that I may enter my Sacred Space
and love beyond my fear
and thus Walk in Balance
with the passing of each glorious Sun.

I Am so grateful for this time together in Beloved Community. I give thanks for the way Spirit infuses this gathering with Divine Wisdom by flowing freely through each heart present. In gratitude for this Sacred Space where it is safe to be fully authentic, I affirm and know that we are here together to support and to be supported... to love and to be loved... to witness and to be witnessed... to forgive and to be forgiven... **This** is Beloved Community... **This** is the Bigger

Table... This is who we are, why we're here, and what we stand for. Mystic Heart is the epicenter of a *Love-Soaked World*, rippling out in all directions to envelop the planet. As above, so below... As within, so without... *The kingdom of heaven is at hand!*⁴

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

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 Video – *One World (We Are One)*, by Mag 7

<https://youtu.be/XHhbeRJudY4>


Lucinda – Blessing for the Offering

Rev. Diana – 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 is needed. Drop-ins are welcome!

 **Kavalya Poirier is still offering Functional Movement through Yoga** on Thursday, 11 am – 12:15 pm.


 **Fast Track to Wellness study & support Group meets Thursdays from 12:30 – 2:30** Drop-ins are welcome!

 **Shining Light on Scripture Metaphysical Bible Study meets Thursdays from 3:00 – 5:00** We finally made it to the New Testament, so if that's what you were waiting for, come on in! 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.

 We have sign-up sheets available for the Vaisakhi Festival booth, the Farmer's Market booth, and the Pride Festival booth. Join in the fun...sign up today!

Mark Your Calendars Now...

 Friday, May 19th, 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

Closing Song

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



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Notes:

¹ Howard Thurman

² Charles Eisenstein

³ Henrietta Mann presented this prayer at the American Indian College Fund Gala in New York City on Nov. 13, 2001

⁴ Matthew 3:2