

You Are the Light of the World

Easter Sunday, April 20, 2025

Rev. Diana Johnson, with Lucinda Alton, RScP,
Chris Johnson, RScP, & musician Dalton Fitzgerald



An Independent Interfaith Community
Practicing the Possible Through Prayer

Rev. Diana – Call to Awareness 3 Bells

Lucinda – Opening Prayer

Rev. Diana, Chris, & Dalton – Opening Music

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

 ***Hands of Grace***, written by Jack Fowler

Rev. Diana – Introduction

Good morning and Happy Easter. If you're new with us today, my name is Rev. Diana Johnson, Pastor and Spiritual Director of Mystic Heart Spiritual Center. We are an Independent Interfaith Community. We teach Universal Principles and Practical Spirituality. I'm so grateful that you've chosen to join us in celebration this morning.

Let's begin looking around to see who is here with us today, celebrating this beautiful Spring day, joining in Sacred Communion and Community...take a moment to really see one another, and to feel the gratitude for these beings that make up your Spiritual Family...the Lights that shine in your life.

Now grounded in a deep sense of gratitude for all of the blessings in your life, let's settle into a moment of peaceful meditation...taking a couple of slow, deep breaths...letting go of all that has come before this moment...allowing the breath to dissolve any thoughts or concerns...relaxing the body...and on the next breath, allowing your awareness to move into the heart space...allowing yourself to rest there for a moment, giving yourself the gift of stillness...feeling content in this moment as you ground yourself in the Peace, the Love, the Beauty, and the Joy of Spirit...feel your Light shining brightly from deep within. You are pure Light expressing...

We recognize and honor the same Light in everyone and everything. There is nowhere that God's Light does not shine.

From the *Book of Matthew*, "You are the light of the world...let your light shine."

We take a moment to feel the Oneness of our global community...Sensing a web of consciousness that covers the planet, each of us a radiant point of Light...all beings who in this moment, are drawn to the Presence of the One...the very atmosphere in which we live, move, and have our being. The Holy Dance of Spirit...I in Thou, and Thou in me...inseparable...each bringing completion to the other. (Pause) As we envision all beings, all of creation, joining the web, we see that there are no spaces between us...

Our web has become the fabric of Life in which we find our place, our purpose, our unique gifts...our Authentic Expression.

Feeling the shared intention that brought us here, there is a deep sense of communion with that which is beyond time and space, beyond definition and description...and we feel the impulse to grow and evolve. As we consciously acknowledge our connection with all of life, our collective Work here is empowered... our collective prayer and meditation leave a positive imprint on the world...on the cosmos...transformation has begun...Wholeness is revealed. And as we begin to acknowledge our Wholeness, we are better able to allow our Light to shine in the world. Again, let the words and the music wash over you in musical meditation.

Rev. Diana, Chris, & Dalton – Song

 **Let My Light Shine**, written by Diana Johnson

Rev. Diana – If you haven't already done so, bring your awareness back to this space, to your body, to your senses...and as you feel ready, allow your eyes to open and bring your awareness back into Community. Welcome back.

Today is Easter Sunday. It has become a cultural celebration in the Western world, as well. It commemorates the resurrection of the Rabbi Yeshua from the tomb on the Sunday after his crucifixion.

This story hails from the Christian tradition, but it is actually much, much older than that. Historically, the Celebration that became Easter began in pre-Christian times in Europe, where a pagan festival was created to celebrate the great Northern goddess Eostre. The early Roman Catholic priests were pretty smart in adopting pagan practices to encourage people to 'convert' to Christianity.

The Easter Story actually comes to us as a retelling of earlier archetypal tales, present in many cultures...It is one example of *The Hero's Journey*. We may understand this particular story as a historical account, literal...factual... or as a mystical teaching, a parable, a symbolic tale that points to a deeper Universal Truth. The fact that our modern-day Easter has its roots in earlier traditions, and likely has mythological aspects, in no way denies the Truth or message it has to offer. Each day of Holy Week, the week leading up to Easter Sunday, holds guidance for us in our modern world if we can look past Christian doctrine and dogma to the example Jesus set, to the message he was spreading.

The Rabbi Yeshua was an example of one who invited everyone to the table. He ate with poor people, lepers, prostitutes, tax collectors, and Pharisees (who were outwardly very critical of him). The people thought him unclean because he spent time with the untouchables of society...they judged him by the company he kept. This still happens today, yes?

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. 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, no matter who they were or what their background or class in society.

What do we actually know about the man called Jesus? Most modern-day scholars agree on three points: Jesus was a Jewish Mystic, he was a Wisdom Teacher, and he was a Social Prophet. His teachings ran counter to conventional wisdom, and to the Jewish teachings he had been raised with.

He taught Peaceful resistance and Unconditional Love in all cases. And because he stood in what he knew to be True, he was ostracized...and eventually put to death.

Let's take a quick look at Holy Week, the week prior to Easter Sunday, to see if it has anything useful for our time. Even in our culture, many people are not familiar with the activities that led to his trial and crucifixion.

Last week was Palm Sunday, the day Jesus rode a young colt into Jerusalem to celebrate Passover, welcomed by his Community by the laying of palm fronds, as was customary when welcoming a king or high official. Growing up Jewish, he had celebrated Passover in Jerusalem every year and must have been well aware the Roman guard would be coming to town, entering through the west gate. And so, he chose to stage a peaceful demonstration...a way of showing people how to peacefully stand up for what they believed in. At the very time the Romans were entering from the west on their mighty steeds, Jesus was quietly entering through the east gate on a colt, or so the story goes. His message was that silent strength and humility show a more powerful stance than forcefulness. Funny, I never learned that in Sunday School.

The day when Jesus supposedly turned over the tables of the money changers is known as Holy Monday. This story is not actually about a master teacher losing his cool over the selling of animals in the Temple for sacrifice. As a Jew, he was likely familiar with and accepting of this practice.

Rather, it is believed to be another staged demonstration in which Jesus was protesting the collusion of Jewish Priests with Roman political leaders in a system of domination that kept the rich *rich*, and the poor *poor*. His message was one of activism.

On Holy Tuesday, Jesus was confronted and challenged by four of the wisest religious leaders in the Temple. They had decided to put him to death but needed evidence to do so legally. They tried to trick him into doing something that would mark him as a false teacher or prophet. But in all four cases, Jesus outwitted the leaders. They could find no evidence. Once again, his approach was peaceful.

That evening, on the Mount of Olives just outside the Temple, Jesus offered a teaching. Basically, he warned that a huge paradigm shift was coming...the world as they had known it was coming to an end, and a new way of living was coming into existence. Sounds familiar, doesn't it? And he offered Good News...and I'll bring this into the present, because it still applies...that all we need to do to usher in this new way of living

is to put Love first...Love God before all else, Love your neighbor as yourself, Love your enemies. He taught that the Kingdom of Heaven is at hand, right where we are, and within...if only we have eyes to see. And he assured us that everything he was doing to promote Healing, we could also do. Basically, Jesus was giving the Power back to the people and both the Romans AND the Temple Priests wanted him stopped.

We have nothing specific recorded for Holy Wednesday, but on Maundy Thursday the disciples prepared for the Passover meal. After sunset, Jesus washed the feet of his disciples, demonstrating the importance of humility and Sacred Service. He knew that being in Service to others enriches *us* beyond measure...that true mastery and leadership *require* us to be in Service. Then

they all shared what is known as the Last Supper and the first Communion.

The breaking of bread and sharing of wine was actually an ancient Practice, a Celebration of the sowing of the grain, in full expectation of its eventual harvest...and the harvesting of the grape, which by Spring would have had time to ferment. This Celebration had been a common Practice throughout many cultures and traditions for as far back as we can trace. It is an act of thankfulness for the many gifts of this earthly realm...and a way to consciously receive those gifts and remember our dependence on, and connection with, the earth.

Jesus was simply using an already-familiar Gratitude Practice as a way to represent the embodiment of something beyond the material...a way to remind an agrarian people that there is more to life than the physical realm. Yes, be thankful for the fruit of the earth, but there is more to it than that. The bread and wine served as a metaphor for the embodiment of his teachings, of his example... a reminder that we are best served by taking into our hearts and minds only that which feeds the soul, that which nourishes the spirit.

On what is known as Good Friday, the story has Jesus going to the garden at Gethsemane to pray, knowing that he would likely be taken that night. He could have stopped it at any time, but he sensed that his teaching would best live on if he was willing to lay his life on the line. Seeing this story as parable, I believe there is a message for us in the story of Good Friday...that our life's journey is about outgrowing harmful behaviors and patterns of thought...that we must allow our stinkin' thinkin' to be crucified (crossed out)...that our small self has to die before our Higher Self can come forth...that no matter what happens, we must Love God and Love one another...and no matter what we experience in life, we must be willing to forgive. It is only through forgiveness that we move forward. We forgive ourselves for past thoughts, words, and actions that have not served our Highest Good. And we forgive others so that we can cut the chain that binds us to them, and to the hurt.

Ceremony and ritual are powerful tools for transformation. I invite you to release any preconceptions you may have around the Sacred act of Communion...and receive it

anew. I invite you now to gently close your eyes and allow the breath to ground you in Spiritual Practice.

(Taken/excerpted from *Real Life Rituals*, by Karyl Huntley)

For as long as grain has been domesticated, the blessing of the first grain cut and the bread made from it have constituted holy acts. The blessing and eating of the bread in this ritual is reminiscent of the Christian Communion, but this ceremony actually has its roots in a much earlier time.

We have come together today, creating a sacred space for our work of honoring the cycle of the grain, which includes its planting, growing, harvesting, and consumption.

We give thanks to the grain that so willingly gives its body to be sacrificed so that the people who tended it when it was growing, and others, can be fed. Know with me that our ritual today is centered in holy time and holy space...we enter the realm of the holy ones...the ancestors who celebrated the grain harvest. We bring awareness to the One Source, trusting we are held.

This bread symbolizes the unconditional support we have on earth. We bless and give thanks for this bread now. Its form nourishes our form and reminds us that anything we need is already given...both the material and the invisible...ideas, guidance, support, connection...the qualities of Beauty, Love, Joy, Peace, Creativity, and Harmony.

By this loaf broken open, we are reminded that, in addition to all the blessings we enjoy in life, there are also sorrows. Each of us has been broken by the unhappiness and grief that comes with living. It is part of the mystery that, in our brokenness, the blessings of love and connection often have a chance to go more deeply into us. We are broken open to be filled with Love.

Dalton – Song

 ***The Two Are One***, written by Lainey Bernstein, RScP & Gary Lynn Floyd

Rev. Diana – As you take a piece of this bread, hold it in your hands and reflect on where it has been. This bread was made from dough, which in turn was made from ground wheat. The wheat was originally in the form of individual kernels growing on a stalk with many other kernels and many stalks growing out of the center of one plant. This wheat plant was born in the spring as a single sprout poking up to the light. The sprout pushed its way out of a single kernel planted in the earth.

With this awareness, take a bite of bread now, realizing that the bread becomes your body as it is digested. Realize, too, that your body is made of earth, water, sunlight, and spiritual intelligence. Feel the earth in your body; feel the rivers in your body; feel the sunlight in each cell; know that the power of life directs every living process.

(Pause)

This bread represents the entire harvest, billions and billions of kernels of wheat, an unlimited abundance. The bread nourishes your body so that you can have harvests in

your own life. And we share the bread in community to remind us that we are sharing this journey we call Life...that we are nourished by one another. This is also a symbol of all earthly blessings that we use, enjoy, and share.

(Pause)

This bread also reminds us that we are here to embody the Love and Generosity of Spirit...to be that Love in action...to forgive, always.

Just as the wheat has given its life for you, you are giving your life for all that you are harvesting. Your time and energy are given away each day for your activities. As you eat the last of your bread, make a vow that the life nourished by this bite of bread will be spent in the highest of ways. What will that way be? What healing will be facilitated by this bread?

What high purpose will be expressed? What gift to humanity will this bread serve? What will you do with this small, but essential unit of your precious life energy?

Dalton – Song

Pass It On, written by Peter Mayer

Rev. Diana – I invite you now to bring your awareness back into your body, into our shared space...and when you feel ready, to open your eyes.

On what is known as Good Friday, the story has Jesus going to the garden at Gethsemane to pray, knowing that he would likely be taken that night. He could have stopped it at any time, but he sensed that his teaching would best live on if he was willing to lay his life on the line. He asked his disciples for support, but they fell asleep. Perhaps this is pointing to the Truth...that each of us has to do our own work...to meet and transcend our own limitations, doubts, and fears. No one can do it for us.

The final words Jesus speaks, at the close of his mission in this life, before he takes his last breath is this: “Father, into thy hands I commend my spirit.” These words imply a supreme confidence in the Universe and in the immortality of the soul.

Two translations of that verse are ‘Into Your hands I commit my spirit’ and ‘Into Your hands I commend my spirit’. I offer my spirit, without question...I commit. And I *commend* my spirit...I *entrust* it to a Power, Intelligence and Process that I can’t see.

Holy Saturday, the day the body lay in the cave, speaks to me of the importance of preparation...in my life that means Spiritual Practice and self-care... not in a self-absorbed way, but so that I have the strength, energy, and emotional reserves to serve...to offer my gifts to the world.

Holy Saturday speaks to a time when choices have been made, actions have been taken, and now there is nothing to do but allow myself to rest quietly in full faith that my efforts are being rewarded...by Spiritual Law, the cause I have set in motion through Communion, Forgiveness, and Surrender is sure to bring my resurrection. In the silence of Saturday, my personal work is done, and the Divine does Their thing...lifts and carries

me, with infinite compassion and love, to the transcendent magic and mystery of Easter morning.

And Easter Sunday...the day we celebrate the movement from human, sense consciousness to Spiritual Awareness. We recognize Jesus as a Way Shower, helping us to see and understand a new way of being. Unity teacher, Charles Fillmore suggests, “The resurrection is the raising up of the whole man – spirit, soul, and body – into the Christ Consciousness of life and wholeness...Every time we rise to the realization of eternal, indwelling life, making union with the (Mother Heart and) Father Mind, the resurrection of Jesus takes place within us. All thoughts of limitation and inevitable obedience to material law are left in the tomb of materiality.”

What does this mean? Every time I take the time to connect with my innate Wisdom, I am realigned with my Spiritual Nature. Every opportunity I take to breathe in the Peace of the Divine and breathe out Love, I reveal more of my Christed Self in the world. Every time I remember the Truth of who I Am and why I’m here, and think, speak, and act accordingly, I transcend all that I have been before. I am resurrected to a new way of living. I move through the world as the Divine Human I was meant to be.

Dalton – Song

 **Hallelujahs**, written by Chris Rice

Rev. Diana – The Resurrection Story is really about rising above previous conditions and ways of being...realigning ourselves in thought, word, and action, releasing all that we think we know...all that is holding us back, to something bigger than ourselves.

We have to let go, in complete faith that all is unfolding for our Good. Unclench the grasp...put down the self-righteousness. It doesn’t serve us. Before we can cultivate a new tomorrow, we have to let it go.

All of our past thoughts and experiences serve as nourishment...they lay the ground for new seeds to be planted. But sometimes compost gets kind of stinky...if we’re not turning it and working it...practicing forgiveness, non-judgment, surrender, gratitude, compassion. These are some of the ways we work with our past experiences so that they can offer us nourishment and insight moving forward.

We move now, into a ritual for the Release of what no longer serves us. Take a moment now to call to mind a habitual pattern of thinking or being that is getting in the way of new life unfolding in your experience. Or maybe there is a relationship, or a person you need to release. Having spiritual community to witness as you commit to letting go is like having help in pulling up a great big weed that was choking out new growth. Set your intention...move it into the Imaginal Realm...see and feel whatever it is being carried off by the hand of the Divine...mentally lay it on the altar...or whatever it takes for you to consciously release it to the Great Mystery, in faith that you are being transformed...feel your freedom from the ties that had you bound.

We are cultivating a new way of being in the world, both individually and collectively. The Latin roots of the word *cultivate* point toward *making ready for habitation, preparing for new life*. This doesn't happen overnight... cultivation is a multi-step process.

Anyone who has ever worked the ground for planting knows that we begin by breaking up the ground. In this way we make water, nutrients, and oxygen available in soil that has become compacted. Then we get rid of whatever weeds have taken root, making room for new seeds to be sown. We add nourishment to replenish what has been used up.

Then finally, we sow the seeds and tend the plants until they have grown strong enough to stand on their own.

The Easter story is teaching us that in order to be resurrected, to rise above previous conditions, to realign ourselves in thought, word, and action, we have to release whatever is holding us back to something bigger than ourselves...call it Spirit, God, Infinite Intelligence, Higher Power, Universe, or the Force. It makes no difference.

We have to let it go, in complete faith that all is unfolding for our Good. Unclench the grasp...put down the self-righteousness. It doesn't serve us. Before we can cultivate a new tomorrow, we have to let it go.

All of our past thoughts and experiences serve as nourishment...they lay the ground for new seeds to be planted. But sometimes compost gets kind of stinky...if we're not turning it and working it...practicing forgiveness, non-judgment, surrender, gratitude, compassion. These are some of the ways we work with our past experiences so that they can offer us nourishment and insight moving forward.

Release Ceremony

Ceremony and ritual are powerful ways to translate Spiritual Practice into form and experience. This morning, I invite you to join me in releasing something or someone...a behavior, a situation, a condition, a person...

Take a few moments to write down one thing that you are willing to commit to releasing from your life...something you will follow through on, no matter what.

...when you have finished writing, make your peace with your decision, fold or crumble up your paper, and place it in the bowl.

We offer Sacred Music to guide your process.

Rev. Diana, Chris, & Dalton – Song

 ***Into Your Hands***, written by Jami Lula

Rev. Diana – Are you ready to let them go? Are you sure? (Light the match) That feels good, doesn't it?

Renewal Ceremony

Now, let's take a couple of deep breaths...in the silence, ask the Spirit within you to offer an affirmation that will support your journey. As you step into the best version of yourself, what is the Wisdom or Guidance that will help you in your process of renewal? Take a quiet moment to write it down. When you are ready, I invite you to come up and speak your affirmation to a Practitioner or Minister... receive a blessing and a gift.

Once again, we offer Sacred Music to guide your process.

Recorded Music

 **Speechless**, by Gary Lynn Floyd

Rev. Diana – This may appear to be a strange gift...flowers are beautiful, but cut flowers are already dead....crucified. I wanted to offer you a living gift...one that through your daily attention will become something beautiful and will continue to grow and bloom for years to come. It will be resurrected every spring or early summer.

Just like the goals and intentions that you set, these mysterious little beauties need fertile soil...they will find optimum health when firmly rooted and grounded in the body of Spirit...the earth...but will also thrive if given a large container.

And just like the goals, and intentions you set, you have absolutely no idea what the outcome will be...how large or what color she will become...

Like our goals and intentions, she will need nourishment and Light. I pray that you use the tending of these flowers as your meditation, as a reminder of the newness that you are cultivating in your life...that every time you water them, or offer a kind word, you remember and speak the affirmation for renewal that you spoke this morning.

Closing Prayer/Love-Soaked World

Letting go of all that holds us back, and stepping into our Highest Potential, we envision and engage in the creation of a Love-Soaked World.

As each one of us lives up to our full potential, we feel and know the unfolding of a world where all beings are peaceful, loving, abundant, and free...where people everywhere practice loving kindness and care for one another and for our planet.

We envision a new story, 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...

Living from our Highest Ideals, we create a world in which every being is valued for their inherent Goodness and Light...where the Peace we cultivate within shows up as a world free of violence. Together we feel and know a world without greed, where there is abundance and contentment in simply having *enough*...

Where every being, as a precious creation of God, is deserving of all the blessings life has to offer and receives those blessings openly and gratefully.

With humanity serving as God's hands, feet, hearts, and voices, ***there is no reason we cannot have such a world.*** We live into this amazing Vision, allowing it to bring a smile to our faces and a song to our hearts...raising our vibration. We carry this Powerful Prayer through the coming week, trusting that it is moving into form and experience in every moment, and so we simply let it be. With nothing and no one in its way, we support our Vision with our actions. We know that our Vision is taking form here and now, as we speak our Powerful Word. And so it is! Amen!

Rev. Diana, Chris, & Dalton – Song

 **Holy Now**, written by Peter Mayer

Rev. Diana – Prayer and Meditation are foundational practices at Mystic Heart. We practice the Possible through Prayer. As we contemplate the story of Jesus rising from the tomb, we see a metaphor for moving past limitation and stepping into Freedom...for stepping out of who we've been and stepping into the one we've come here to be. This day of resurrection, this season of renewal, reminds us that anything is possible...anything is possible. What if we lived our lives as though this were true?

What if we were to move through life, grounded in the faith that whatever we are looking for is also looking for us? What is it we are looking for? Greater meaning, Purpose, Peace, Joy, and Compassion? It almost sounds like we're looking for God. What does it mean to be looking for God and to have God looking for me? Maybe it means that Infinite Intelligence is waiting for me to live the authentic life I was made to live...maybe It is awaiting *Its* opportunity to live *Its* full expression in, through and AS me...in, through and AS each one of us.

I invite us to use the celebration of Easter each year as a reminder of how we might promote peaceful, grass-roots, social change, empowered by faith and guided by prayerful communion. Let it remind us that Spiritual Law is always at work, that we can channel and direct it as Jesus did, consciously using it for our own Good and the Good of others.

May we remember that faith and expectation make a difference in outcomes, and by placing our faith in what is life-affirming, miraculous things happen.

John 14:12 tells us that Jesus spoke to his disciples this way: "Truly, truly, I tell *you*, he who believes in me, the works that I *do*, he will *do* also; and he will *do greater* works than *these*..."

It seems the people of his time were not ready to hear...I have to wonder, as a human family, are we? I think we are...I think it's time...big change is happening. We are not sure how fast it will happen, or what it will look like, but over 2000 years after this teacher's powerful message, we are waking up in powerful ways. It's like we have been in the dark ages and a new Enlightenment is occurring.

Let's wrap up and continue our Celebration next door. Celebration is a vital part of our Spiritual Practice. As a community, we celebrate by giving thanks for all of life's

blessings. Together, we express our gratitude to God and to one another. We view celebration as a holy act, a creative act, an act of worship and devotion to the One Source of all of Life. By celebrating, we feel and express our inherent Joy, which brings more to feel Joyful about!

And so, in celebration and deep gratitude, I thank you for joining us this morning for our time of devotion and celebration. It is in community that we come to know who we are.

Rev. Diana – Love Offering

We also offer you the opportunity to celebrate the work we are doing in the world by sharing your financial Good.

If you're joining us online, you can go to **mysticheart.org** to use our Donate Button or to find our mailing address.

We're going to share a tune from back in the 70's...if you know it, don't be afraid to help us out.

Rev. Diana, Chris, & Dalton – Offertory Song

 ***Put Your Hand in the Hand***, written by Gene MacLellan

Lucinda – Closing Gratitude Prayer

Rev. Diana – There is information available about upcoming events in the April Bulletin...take one home with you. And check out our amazing website.

Most importantly, tickets are on sale today for April and Maile's Embodying Gratitude, this coming Saturday from 2:00-4:30 pm.

Information Cards if new people

Prayer Requests: I am available after service – We invite everyone to help us make a private space for prayer here in the Sanctuary by joining us next door for lunch

Rev. Diana, Chris, & Dalton – Closing Song

What's Your Gospel Gonna' Be? Written by Gary Lynn Floyd & Jami Lula



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