

UNITY WORLD DAY OF PRAYER: LOVE IS ALIVE!

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Well, on this World Day of Prayer, I'm reminded that Unity's first basic principle, or basic first teaching, is that God's essence is the wisdom and love – love -- that animates, supports, and moves through all living beings. And prayer helps to remind us that there's a Divine Presence that is omnipresent, and that this loving essence -- this spark of divinity -- exists in all living things.

Prayer allows us to get quiet and to remember: *"I am an expression of divine energy."* We are expressions of divine energy. Therefore, if God is, then I am divine love. If God is, you are divine love. If we are expressions of this loving Presence, then we are called to take action from that place of love within us. To feel the love and the energy that connects us to every living being on the planet. And then to be loving awareness as we move about the world.

So many of you know, I was just on a cruise to Alaska. One experience that really brought this idea of "Love is Alive!" home for me was the first full day at sea. My husband and I were eating breakfast at the breakfast table but it was like a breakfast banquet, if you will, because it was ceiling to floor windows in front of us. The open sea.

And then suddenly, in the peace and the calm of just looking at the open ocean, suddenly this spray of mist rose up from the ocean: a whale's blowhole. And it was really close to the boat. And immediately, in this entire side of the ship, there was a collective, audible, joyful gasp of, *"Oh! Look!"* And the entire ship full of adults rushed to that side of the ship, the boat, squealing with joy. There is nothing like hearing a room full of adults squealing with joy! All of us captivated by the wonder, the amazement of seeing this magnificent animal.

And I have to tell you, tears came to my eyes. My heart swelled. Because what I was witnessing was this collective love of something absolutely amazing on this planet. It was a shared love of nature; a shared experience of joy in experiencing this incredible animal's breath.

And joy is an expression of love. In that moment, we were all connected by joy.

And so, during that seven-day journey of sharing space with about 2,500 people -- like a little floating city -- we experienced many moments like that, this little floating city. Great joy, excitement, celebration, harmony with one another, connection with family and friends. Even while sharing crowded eating spaces; even while being goofy with this "Pajama Night" and "Red Evening Night" and "80s Workout Night."

But there was something beautiful about the ability to simply be ourselves and be silly with other people who were complete strangers. That openness allowed for acceptance. It allowed for joy. And, again, joy is an expression of love.

And there were other collective awe-inspiring gasps as we saw glaciers and rainforests and salmon trying to make their way upstream. And native totem poles and bald eagles. And again and again, we witnessed a shared love of nature and this oneness of feeling connected to it ... but also to each other.

And it made me think: when we allow ourselves to express who we really are; when we respect our differences; when we support one another; and when we all come together in this shared love and joy, that is love in action. That is living in harmony with one another. That is love being alive in us and through us.

It was this reminder, one after another, that we can all come together. and interact with one another from our heart space. That through that same Spirit that moves through all of us, we can come together as human beings in love. We can allow love to be alive even in the unlikelyst of places.

And in each place we visited, I was reminded of the indigenous peoples who had long understood the importance of community. They had to come together to build community, to trade, to survive with one another, to support one another. And they also came together to celebrate, to dance. And they came together as a community to grieve. Because as human beings, we need one another. We have always needed one another.

So, wandering around Alaska and around this little, small cruise ship city, I was reminded so deeply that we humans share a love: a love of nature and this planet we call home; love of the incredible animals and ecosystems that share this earth with us; a love of family and friends, new and old. A love of relaxation, fun, celebration, dancing ... just as our ancestors did.

And I was reminded of that -- just so simple, but I'll say it again -- that love expands joy. Love expands joy, and joy brings love alive. It's a Catch-22. Love expands joy. Joy brings love alive. The more joy we experience, the more love we experience. Because love is alive within us. It is alive within all beings on earth. It has been there from the beginning of time.

So, what if we considered each moment of our day as if we were on a little small cruise ship -- our own little, tiny floating city -- as we go about our lives. And as we go about our little floating city, what if we embody kindness and respect? Honor and revel in nature? Embrace time with friends and family? And maybe even stretch ourselves to make new friends and expand that joy and that love? What if we lived as though every interaction were an opportunity to bring love alive?

It would mean living and loving fully in each moment. So, we just need to pause. We just need to notice it.

The Scripture from tonight comes from Colossians 3, Verse 14. Here on your screen -- it says, *"Above all, clothe yourselves with love."*

Above all, clothe yourselves with love. So, in a world where there is anger and frustration and division and sorrow -- love. Awaken that love that is naturally within you. And because it is within you -- because you are one with love -- it is up to you to express it.

Jesus is recorded as saying in John, Chapter 13, Verse 34, this -- on your screen. He says, *"I give you a new commandment, that you love one another. Just as I have loved you, you also should love one another."*

Notice what Jesus did not say. He did not say love only your friends. He did not say love only your family. He did not say love only those you agree with. He said, *"Love one another as I have loved you."*

And how did Jesus love? He welcomed the stranger. He embraced those who were shunned and looked down upon by society. He loved his neighbor and he loved his enemy. He taught us to treat others as we would like to be treated. And all of those are demonstrations of love in action.

And here's the beautiful thing: loving others does not deplete our own wellspring of love. It actually allows it to grow!

So tonight, on this World Day of Prayer, we're reminded to be more loving; more conscious of other beings around us in the natural world, in our neighborhoods, in our communities, in our social media communities -- everywhere we go.

So, my question for you tonight is: What action can you take to bring love alive in your life and in your own world around you? What if you were to live your life in awe, joy, care, compassion? In other words, what if you choose to bring love into your world?

Don't wait for it. Bring it into your world. Because each of us -- it's up to each of us -- to embody and express love in order for there to be more love in the world.

So, I'm going to invite you to claim this with me: *"Through my actions, love is alive."*

Together: [with congregants] *"Through my actions, love is alive."*

"Through my beingness, love is alive."

Together: [with congregants] *"Through my beingness, love is alive."*

Through my presence, love is alive."

Together: [with congregants] *"Through my presence, love is alive."*

And so it is. And so it is! Go out and be it. Because the truth is: you are it. You are the love. Keep bringing it alive.

Blessings, everyone.

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