

## **“We Matter”**

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Thank you for this healing. Thank you all for inviting me to be here today. Special acknowledgment to Pastor David and his family during this time. Tripp, thank you for being such a loving presence. First time guests, please come back a second time and hear David; he’s the real deal!

Most of you know that I am the Executive Director of Trans HeartLine, a 501c3 post-op house here in Marin. We provide safe, affordable, post-op housing for folks having gender affirmation surgery. Last year with such loving support from this community we were able to help over thirty folks through the surgical part of their gender journey. There are so many of us in the Trans community who have a hard time with economic hardship, social hardships, familial hardships, societal hardships, that we saw an opportunity to create a loving space. My thoughts of renting a room out for folks became fulltime caregiving, house-managing and nonprofit-starting.

I do want to invite you all to skip down to Westminster Presbyterian right after this service today if you would like to find out more about the work we are doing or want to sign up to volunteer in the Trans community as a whole. I was invited to be speaker for their Adult Ed hour after preaching there last year. I guess now that I’m forty-six, I’m adult enough to have some education to teach! With that...

From Thomas Merton (paraphrasing) we learn that communication on its deepest level is communion. But here is the entire quote:

*The deepest level of communication is not communication, but communion. It is wordless. It is beyond words, and it is beyond speech, and it is beyond concept. Not that we discover a new unity. We discover an older unity. My dear Brothers [and Sisters], we are already one. But we imagine that we are not. And what we have to recover is our original unity. What we have to be is what we are.*

Who are we? I believe that the Spirit of Breath is my faith in action! I am what I do and not what I say I do. So with that Spirit, today is going to be interactive. You have just journeyed through the four elements: air, fire, water, and earth. If we look through the lens of science and matter for a minute and apply the four elements, we get an expanded look at matter. Webster defines matter (as a noun) as *anything that has weight and takes up space*; and (as a verb) it means *to be of importance, of significance*. Within the context of matter is the energy. Energy is the structure and properties of matter. We could say that air is matter in expanded form. Fire is matter in heat form. Water is matter in liquid form. Earth is matter in solid form. Today let’s have a look at breath and Spirit as matter. Our first breath is “life.” Our Last breath is “death,” and in between we try to “matter.”

Sometimes breath is also referred to as Spirit, as in “Spirit of the Living God” and “Holy Ghost.” Is there a certain memory or picture that comes to your mind about a Spirit or a spirit-filled person, a memory, a thought (thoughts become things)? That thought of a previous image became a memory of something you may not have witnessed, but your mind doesn’t know the difference.

In the brain centers of memory, it has been proven that you don’t have to actually experience an event to have physical sensations of that event. The body’s responses to events seen but not witnessed are called *mirror neurons*. So we can think about an event and trigger our body to respond to that event just by thinking about it. When we empathize with a friend, we can almost feel their pain even though we didn’t experience it. The body may even respond by raising your temperature or elevating your heart rate.

Let’s look at how breath affects the body. We inhale the element air, the invisible, life-giving wind. We inhale invisible life into our nose, down the back of our throats (I invite you to notice your body with me). In my nose I feel the cool air become warm as it goes down the back of my throat into my lungs. In my lungs, the element of air becomes human, and now air is breath, oxygenating all the nooks and crannies of my insides. How many times are we told to breathe when we get anxious or upset? I worked in fast food as a teenager and needed a break, but I didn’t smoke. So I started smoking so I could take a “smoke break.” I just needed to breathe a minute. I needed a breath break.

Coming back to the breath within. As we feel the air come in and become breath, breath becomes human, as we are aware of the ways it cleans and detoxifies our bodies. Now shifting from the inhale body system to the exhale body system: on the way back to our lungs our human gathers the toxins and then sends them out of our lungs. Our human becomes nitrogen and oxygen and carbon dioxide, and now my exhales become air again.

I invite you to place your left hand on your stomach, your right hand on your heart, and close your eyes. Notice how your left hand rises and falls with your inhale and exhale. Now with your right hand notice your heartbeat. I invite you to hold your breath for a minute and feel how your heartbeat changes the longer you hold your breath. Feel how your muscles tighten the longer you try to hold your breath. Exhale. What do you feel? Now take ten really fast inhale/exhales. Notice how your breath quickens; does your heart rate? What else quickens our heart rate, our thoughts? What do we want to do when our thoughts are racing in our mind? We want to breathe! Has anyone ever felt like the walls were closing in? Those were thoughts in your head that created a lack of breath, increased your heart rate, increased tightness in your muscles, which caused a need for an increased rate of air exchange. Thoughts became things: rapid heart rate, tight muscles, shortness of breath.

Keep your left hand on your stomach, your receiving left hand. Feel your stomach extend as you breathe in, receiving life from the element of air. Your receiving hand becomes aware that you are receiving the element of air into your body, giving you awareness of life as you know it. Doing this exercise helps create present moment awareness. You know right now, in the present moment, that you are breathing. When you exhale, science tells us, you are exhaling 78% nitrogen, oxygen and carbon dioxide. Chemistry tells us that when the nitrogen level in the body increases, the heart has a feeling of warmth and happiness. Science also tells us that when we have a deep emotional connection

with someone, our body releases oxytocin, and we have feelings of warmth and happiness. Still with your left hand on your stomach and your right hand on your heart, I invite you to open your eyes and follow your exhale. Your human, in exhale, becomes the air of the human in front of you, next to you, behind you. Did you see their hair move with your exhale? When they inhale air and it becomes breath in them, then it becomes their human. It's pretty easy to see how we are all one just by breathing together. Your human was just exhaled as invisible nitrogen, oxygen, and carbon dioxide. From invisible breath to Spirit for me has been the journey of finding my voice, inviting breath into action.

What creates sound? Breath across a cord that vibrates at an audible frequency. For centuries, mystics have been telling us that sound creates matter. If we look at Thomas Merton's idea that communication on its deepest level is communion, we can ask: What are we communicating with our breath, our words, our actions? Where can we shift our breath, our life force, to an attitude of gratitude and get out of the lower vibration world of the *I'm sorry* and into the higher vibrations of *Thank you*?

When "I'm sorry for being late" becomes "Thank you for your patience with my time navigation," there is gratitude for the person who may be hurt or offended in some way by our tardiness, and at the same time, we didn't create an excuse for our tardiness, but instead acknowledged our part without beating ourselves up. Where can we take breath breaks for gratitude? If our thoughts become things and we begin to think gratitude. When we are running late, how many excuses do we try to think up? What if we just thought about ways to give gratitude? The Spirit of the breath then becomes gratitude. Our life becomes a force of gratitude. Thoughts become things.

If energy is the structure and properties of matter, what else is at work that we can't see? When folks come and stay and recover at the Trans HeartLine house, here is the kind of feedback we receive:

*What an amazing, loving place to be for my post-op stay. Papa Bear Jordan was the hug and a laugh that I need so much.*

*I feel like most of the world hates me. From the minute I spoke to Jordan on the phone, it was all love. The volunteers at the house were great! Jane, the retired nurse, was amazing at helping me with my bandages and being such an amazing presence.*

*I'm not religious. I've been hurt by the church my whole life. There is a quote in the kitchen window about doing all things in love. This place is just that ... Love.*

The structure and properties of matter can be the energies of love just as easily as energies of fear. Science tell us that our electromagnetic energy can be measured, and it extends about an arms-length out from our bodies. I'm going to invite you to stretch your arms out wide. If this is how big our energetic field is, we can say that as we move closer into the body, we *matter!* We are perfect, whole and ripening on this road called life, and each and every one of us matters in all of our matter! A-ho. And so it is.