



What Does It Mean To Be a People of Forgiveness?



October 2019

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“Forgiveness,” the saying goes, “means giving up all hope for a better past.”

We often talk about Unitarian Universalism as a faith tradition in which “revelation is not sealed.” Which is to say, we try to hold our religious tradition – and ourselves – open to new understandings and the challenges and opportunities for growth they present. But what makes this openness possible? And, perhaps more significantly, given the many missteps and hurtful mistakes each of us inevitably makes, what does it even mean to hold the future open? How do we hold ourselves accountable, individually and collectively, for past wrongs in a way that will help us grow into more just and equitable ways of being in the future?

Forgiveness is key. *Not* the kind of forgiveness so often paired with forgetting, but the kind that names the wrongs of the past and learns from them in a humbling, transformative process. *Not* the kind that puts a band aid on a badly broken bone and calls it a fix. Being a “people of forgiveness” means doing the hard work of understanding the pain we or others have caused and making difficult choices about how and when to release the grip of that old story of injury long enough to make a new turn of events possible in the future.

This is true whether you’re thinking about wrongs that have been done to you or things you’ve done yourself that may be difficult for you or others to forgive. It is true whether forgiveness feels possible or not. Sometimes, it might be premature to forgive, but even then, we can hold open the possibility of forgiveness in the future. As I wrote in *CommUNITY* this month, forgiveness “is a posture more than a gesture, an orientation more than a deed, a practice rather than a creed.”

This makes it especially suitable as a theme for our Chalice Circles. As you live with the topic of “Forgiveness” this month, choose a practice and a question that helps you wrestle with what makes forgiveness difficult in your life – and what makes it possible. Try to consider both your own need for forgiveness or self-forgiveness *and* your struggles to forgive others. They are often more related than we assume. It will take time. It will likely not be simple. Forgiveness is not supposed to be easy or quick. But it can be a profound way of tending to the past without letting the past pre-determine the future. As the writer Jen Hatmaker noted, “Forgiveness is the key that [opens] the lock to that prison. It’s freedom.”

May your practices, questions and conversations this month be fruitful and freeing.

Karen Hering

Our Spiritual Exercises

Option A: Visualizing Paths to Forgiveness

Sometimes we need to visualize a way toward forgiveness before we can get there. For this spiritual exercise, you'll need blank paper and some colorful pens as you draw your particular path to forgiveness and acknowledge the obstacles that may be impeding you from getting there.

There are many ways to create a visual path of forgiveness—maps, simple line drawings, maybe even a maze. You may be trying to forgive someone or seeking forgiveness for your own actions. Visualizing the process might help reframe the situation and open you to new ways of understanding.

An example: For a maze, create a list of actions or thoughts that help you to forgive others and yourself. These will become openings or doorways in your maze. How many doorways are on your list? That is how many openings you should include in your maze—plus two more. The two extra are the doorways you have yet to discover but hope to encounter. Next, create a list of actions or thoughts that hinder your forgiveness of others or yourself. These will be the roadblocks or deadends in your maze. After making your lists, draw a maze that starts where you are and ends with an opening to the forgiveness you seek. In between, include a deadend for each barrier to forgiveness you have listed and an opening for each doorway to forgiveness you have listed plus two more, unnamed. (Label them on the maze if you like.)

Or you prefer a map, consider what the terrain of forgiveness might look like. Draw up the same two lists noted above – of actions, thoughts or conditions that help you to forgive and one of barriers to forgiveness in yourself and others. Then imagine those as geographical terrain (e.g., the swamps of shame, a bridge of clear communication, a forest of unknown intentions). Make a map that includes these terrain you've named and draw and label a potential route through them.

Over the course of the month, return to what you've created at least once a week. Promise yourself at least 20 minutes each time to look carefully at what you've created. As you examine your path(s) to forgiveness, do you see new roadblocks or obstacles that need to be added? Are there new doorways and openings or pathways that might help clear the way to forgiveness? Does your map change if you look more closely at it? How does your picture change over the course of the month?

Create as many mazes or maps or pictures as you need. Then come to your group ready to share the paths you discovered - and where your journey is calling you to go (and what it is calling you to do) next.

Option B: Nightly Meditations on Forgiveness

For this month, make a commitment to do a mental review of the day in the time before you go to bed. Is there anyone or anything you need to forgive in order to move forward in love? Any action you need to release or any lingering resentments that may be

accumulating in your heart? These can be tiny — someone who cut you off in a meeting, that driver who didn't let you merge. They may feel larger — unkind words from a friend, a forgotten lunch date, a betrayal of trust, repeated micro-aggressions that seem to harden into a pattern of abuse.

Also ask: is there anything you have done that you wish could be forgiven? What steps might you take to prepare the way for asking for forgiveness?

Over the course of the month, see how it feels to put yourself in a posture of forgiveness. Visualize whatever rankled you that day and say, out loud, "I forgive you. I forgive you and I let this feeling go." Or if you have committed a wrong against someone else, visualize what you might change, in yourself or in that situation, that might make an apology or request for forgiveness meaningful to the person you have harmed.

Practice the practice. If you forget one night, forgive yourself and take it up again the next. Pay attention to any changes you feel. Notice what seems hard to forgive, what feels impossible. Notice if you find yourself letting go of slights more easily — or not. Or what is more challenging — offering forgiveness or asking for it? Come to your group ready to discuss how this felt, what, if anything, changed for you as you practiced personal forgiveness for the month.

Option C: Forgiveness on a Social Scale

Several of the pieces below explore the question of forgiveness on a social rather than simply personal scale. Or they link the personal injury to larger institutional and systemic issues when examining forgiveness, repair, apologies, and reparations for harm done to African Americans, indigenous people, people of color or others suffering from systemic oppression. Make time to read/watch/listen to at least four of these pieces included in the resources at the end of this packet. Then consider your response to them.

- Sherman Alexie, "The Powwow at the End of the World"
- Hafizah Geter, "Theater of Forgiveness"
- "The Movement for Black Lives: Reparations"
- Robert Jones Jr., "The Matter of Forgiveness"
- "A Rap on Race: Margaret Mead and James Baldwin's Rare Conversation on Forgiveness and the Difference Between Guilt and Responsibility"
- Layli Long Soldier, "The Freedom of Real Apologies"
- All Rev'd Up: Episode Three: "Thou Shall (Not) Forgive"
- Sharon Risher, *For Such a Time as This: Hope & Forgiveness After the Charleston Massacre* (2019)

What feelings emerge you read these pieces? How is forgiveness connected to social justice? What is the relationship between forgiveness and reparations? What role is yours to play in addressing systems of injustice and white supremacy in terms of forgiveness? Is forgiveness necessary in working toward justice? Is it even possible? How — or why not? Come to your group ready to share your insights and your thoughts, your concerns and your ideas.

Your Question

As always, don't treat these questions like "homework" or try to answer every single one. Instead, make time to meditate and reflect on the list and then pick the one question that speaks to you most. The goal is to figure out which question is "yours." Which question captures the call of your inner voice? Which one contains "your work"? What is it trying to get you to notice? Where is it trying to lead you?

1. What did your parents and family members teach you about forgiveness: its meanings, how to practice it, when to deny it? Are these childhood and cultural lessons about forgiveness helpful in deepening your spiritual growth? Are there ways that these traditional scripts prevent you from growing spiritually?
2. What is the relationship between mercy and forgiveness? Can you identify times when you have been forgiven? Did you ask or was forgiveness given without a request? How did it feel?
3. When you feel resentment and anger about the way you have been treated, where do you carry those feelings in your body? Can you identify how it feels, physically, to hold a grudge? Can you identify how it feels to let it go?
4. What might happen if you understood forgiveness as a path or a journey, a posture or orientation, instead of a finite act?
5. Do you need to ask forgiveness or offer it for something that happened long ago, maybe even before you were born? What is the role or impact of forgiveness on us when it relates to injuries inflicted or suffered by our ancestors?
6. How do you feel about the phrase "forgive and forget?" Should you forget? Is forgetting a necessary element in forgiveness? What does that phrase mean in your lived experience?
7. Can you identify a moment when, after a long time, you forgave someone? What actions and words allowed that moment to happen? Is it something you would like to experience again?
8. Is it time to let go of bitterness and finally forgive? Or are some actions simply unforgivable?
9. How do you feel when you apologize, say "I'm sorry" and mean it? How often do you apologize? Do you do it too easily, or is it very challenging for you?
10. What does it mean to forgive ourselves? Is it possible or does it need to come from the one we've harmed?
11. What is holy or divine about forgiveness? Do acts of forgiveness inform your spiritual practices or your understanding of the holy?

What's your question? Your question may not be listed above. As always, if the above questions don't include what life is asking from you, spend the month listening to your days to hear it.

Companion Pieces

Recommended Resources for Personal Exploration & Reflection

The following resources are not required reading. We will not analyze these pieces in our group. Instead they are here to companion you on your journey this month, get your thinking started and open you to new ways of thinking about what it means to be part of a people of Forgiveness.

Word Roots

Forgiveness: From the Old English word *forgiefan* “give, grant, allow; remit (a debt), pardon (an offense)”

Wise Words

With each act of forgiveness, whether small or great, we move toward wholeness. Without forgiveness, we remain tethered to the person who harmed us. We are bound with chains of bitterness, tied together, trapped. Until we can forgive the person who harmed us, that person will hold the keys to our happiness; that person will be our jailor. When we forgive, we take back control of our own fate and our feelings. We become our own liberators. We don't forgive to help the other person. We don't forgive for others. We forgive for ourselves. ~ Desmond Tutu

Forgiveness is a heartache and difficult to achieve because strangely, it not only refuses to eliminate the original wound, but actually draws us closer to its source. To approach forgiveness is to close in on the nature of the hurt itself, the only remedy being, as we approach its raw center, to reimagine our relation to it. ~ David Whyte
For me, forgiveness and compassion are always linked: How do we hold people accountable for wrongdoing and yet at the same time remain in touch with their

humanity enough to believe in their capacity to be transformed? ~ bell hooks

Confront the dark parts of yourself, and work to banish them with illumination and forgiveness. Your willingness to wrestle with your demons will cause your angels to sing. ~ August Wilson

“part of what we are building is the capacity for radical and rapid forgiveness. we are imperfect, steadily human in our endeavor to love and learn each other. the missteps are myriad and relevant and hilarious. what we are developing is not a more perfect way of walking, but a more forgiving and compassionate way of dancing. and i don't know, but i wonder if that is actually the central lesson of now – forgiveness. ancestral intergenerational forgiveness, and immediate interdependent forgiveness. the faster we can forgive ourselves and others for what seems to be error, the more quickly we can be in the ease and playfulness of this game of life. ~ adrienne maree brown

Mercy, grace, forgiveness, and compassion are synonyms, and the approaches we might consider taking when facing a great big mess, especially the great big mess of ourselves — our arrogance, greed, poverty, disease, prejudice. It includes everything out there that just makes us sick and makes us want to turn away, the idea of accepting

life as it presents itself and doing goodness anyway, the belief that love and caring are marbled even into the worst life has to offer. ~ Anne Lamott

Holding on to anger is like grasping a hot coal with the intent of throwing it at someone else; you are the one getting burned. ~ Buddha

Now, when I talk about forgiving, I don't mean excusing. That's one confusion. Excusing one another, and ourselves, is something that we have to do all the time, if we're to be functional, civil, and humane. It's like the old distinction between venal and mortal sins. We excuse the former, the little offenses. We let them go, like so much dust, or so many grains of sand, blowing around and tossed at us, threatening to dent our composure or gum up the works of our souls. Being slow to anger or to take offense can be the sign of a mature, composed, and gracious soul.
~ UU minister John Buehrens

We must develop and maintain the capacity to forgive. He who is devoid of the power to forgive is devoid of the power to love. There is some good in the worst of us and

some evil in the best of us. When we discover this, we are less prone to hate our enemies. ~ Martin Luther King, Jr.

Everyone says that forgiveness is a lovely idea until they themselves have something to forgive. ~ C.S. Lewis

Forgiveness. The ability to forgive oneself. Stop here for a few breaths and think about this because it is the key to making art, and very possibly the key to finding any semblance of happiness in life. ... I believe, more than anything, that this grief of constantly having to face down our own inadequacies is what keeps people from being writers. Forgiveness, therefore, is key. I can't write the book I want to write, but I can and will write the book I am capable of writing. Again and again throughout the course of my life I will forgive myself.
~ Ann Patchett

Forgiveness isn't just the absence of anger. I think it's also the presence of self-love, when you actually begin to value yourself.
~ Tara Westover

Poetry

Sherman Alexie, The Powwow at the End of the World

I am told by many of you that I must forgive and so I shall
after an Indian woman puts her shoulder to the Grand Coulee Dam
and topples it. I am told by many of you that I must forgive
and so I shall after the floodwaters burst each successive dam
downriver from the Grand Coulee. I am told by many of you
that I must forgive and so I shall after the floodwaters find
their way to the mouth of the Columbia River as it enters the Pacific
and causes all of it to rise. I am told by many of you that I must forgive
and so I shall after the first drop of floodwater is swallowed by that salmon
waiting in the Pacific. I am told by many of you that I must forgive and so I shall
after that salmon swims upstream, through the mouth of the Columbia
and then past the flooded cities, broken dams and abandoned reactors
of Hanford. I am told by many of you that I must forgive and so I shall
after that salmon swims through the mouth of the Spokane River
as it meets the Columbia, then upstream, until it arrives
in the shallows of a secret bay on the reservation where I wait alone.
I am told by many of you that I must forgive and so I shall after
that salmon leaps into the night air above the water, throws
a lightning bolt at the brush near my feet, and starts the fire
which will lead all of the lost Indians home. I am told
by many of you that I must forgive and so I shall
after we Indians have gathered around the fire with that salmon
who has three stories it must tell before sunrise: one story will teach us
how to pray; another story will make us laugh for hours;
the third story will give us reason to dance. I am told by many
of you that I must forgive and so I shall when I am dancing
with my tribe during the powwow at the end of the world.

Mark Jarman, Five Psalms

First forgive the silence
 That answers prayer,
Then forgive the prayer
 That stains the silence.

Excuse the absence
 That feels like presence,
Then excuse the feeling
 That insists on presence.

Pardon the delay
Of revelation,
Then ask pardon for revealing
Your impatience.

Forgive God
For being only a word,
Then ask God to forgive
The betrayal of language.

Find the complete poem here: <https://www.poetryfoundation.org/poems/54714/five-psalms>

Mary Oliver, Wild Geese

You do not have to be good.
You do not have to walk on your knees
for a hundred miles through the desert repenting.
You only have to let the soft animal of your body
love what it loves.
Tell me about despair, yours, and I will tell you mine.
Meanwhile the world goes on.
Meanwhile the sun and the clear pebbles of the rain
are moving across the landscapes,
over the prairies and the deep trees,
the mountains and the rivers.
Meanwhile the wild geese, high in the clean blue air,
are heading home again.
Whoever you are, no matter how lonely,
the world offers itself to your imagination,
calls to you like the wild geese, harsh and exciting
over and over announcing your place
in the family of things.

William Carlos Williams, This is Just to Say

I have eaten	saving
the plums	for breakfast
that were in	
the icebox	Forgive me
	they were delicious
and which	so sweet
you were probably	and so cold

James Lasdun, Blueberries

I'm talking to you old man.

Listen to me as you step inside this garden
to fill a breakfast bowl with blueberries
ripened on the bushes I'm planting now,
twenty years back from where you're standing.

It's strictly a long-term project—first year
pull off the blossoms before they open,
second year let them flower, watch the bees
bobbing in every bonnet,
but don't touch the fruit till year three,
and then only sample a handful or two . . .

Old man I'm doing this for you!

You know what they say about blueberries:
blood-cleansing, mood-lifting memory-boosters;
every bush a little fountain of youth
sparkling with flavonoids, anthocyanin . . .

I've spent all summer clearing brush
sawing locust poles for the frames,
digging in mounds of pine needles, bales of peat moss—
I thought I'd do it while I still could.

You can do something for me in turn:
think about the things an old man should;
things I've shied away from, last things.

Care about them only don't care too
(you'll know better than I do what I mean
or what I couldn't say, but meant).

Reconcile, forgive, repent,
but don't go soft on me; keep the faith,
our infidels' implicit vow:

“not the hereafter but the here and now . . .”

Weigh your heart against the feather of truth
as the Egyptians did, and purge its sin,
but for your own sake, not your soul's.

And since the only certain
eternity's the one that stretches backward,
look for it here inside this garden:

Blueray, Bluecrop, Bluetta, Hardy Blue;
little fat droplets of transubstantiate sky,
each in its yeast-misted wineskin, chilled in dew.

This was your labor, these are the fruits thereof.
Fill up your bowl old man and bring them in.

Articles, Podcasts and Videos

ARTICLES

Emily Click, What We Learn When We Listen,

Harvard Divinity School Bulletin, December 19, 2017,

<https://hds.harvard.edu/news/2017/12/19/Emily-Click-What-We-Learn-When-We-Listen#>

Written in the context of the #metoo movement, Rev. Click argues that sometimes forgiveness comes too quickly, that sometimes we need to listen longer, to pause, before moving to forgive people who have harmed us: “what we as a society have failed to do, and need now to repent, is to count the cost paid by victims.”

Hafizah Geter, Theater of Forgiveness

Longreads, November 2018, <https://longreads.com/2018/11/02/theater-of-forgiveness/>

A powerful look at forgiveness offered African Americans; Geter wonders if forgiveness is another aspect of white supremacy, a requirement of slavery that has hardened into tradition.

Robert Jones Jr., The Matter of Forgiveness

Gawker, October 17, 2015, <https://gawker.com/the-matter-of-forgiveness-1737109007>

A second, shorter examination of African American attitudes toward forgiveness, and the complexities of power and race in the United States.

Jack Kornfield, The Practice of Forgiveness

2019, <https://jackkornfield.com/the-practice-of-forgiveness/>

Popular Buddhist writer Jack Kornfield explains that “Buddhist psychology offers specific teachings and practices for the development of forgiveness. Like the practice of compassion, forgiveness does not ignore the truth of our suffering. Forgiveness is not weak. It demands courage and integrity. Yet only forgiveness and love can bring about the peace we long for.” The article includes a link to a series of forgiveness meditations.

Cassandra Nelson, Toni Morrison, Novelist of Forgiveness

First Things, August 20, 2019, <https://www.firstthings.com/web-exclusives/2019/08/toni-morrison-novelist-of-forgiveness>

Written soon after Morrison’s death, Nelson’s article explore how Morrison’s approach to her characters “springs from a patience that is also forgiveness.”

A Rap on Race: Margaret Mead and James Baldwin’s Rare Conversation on Forgiveness and the Difference Between Guilt and Responsibility

(originally recorded on August 25, 1970), <https://www.brainpickings.org/2015/03/19/a-rap-on-race-margaret-mead-and-james-baldwin/>

A fascinating conversation between two great twentieth-century intellectuals.

Rabbi Rami Shapiro, The Essence of Forgiveness

Spirituality and Health, January 25, 2012,

<https://spiritualityhealth.com/articles/2012/01/25/essence-forgiveness>

Rabbi Rami Shapiro explores forgiveness as an attitude. “Forgiveness isn’t a tactic; it is your default level of engagement. You forgive because you know we are all trapped in our own madness over which we have no control. Not forgiving simply locks you into additional layers of suffering that have no beneficial results at all.”

Sharon Salzberg, Forgiveness Can Be Bittersweet

On Being, August 17, 2015 <https://onbeing.org/blog/forgiveness-can-be-bittersweet/>

The Movement for Black Lives: Reparations

<https://policy.m4bl.org/reparations/>

Part of the platform of demands created by the Movement for Black Lives. It starts: “We demand reparations for past and continuing harms. The government, responsible corporations and other institutions that have profited off of the harm they have inflicted on Black people — from colonialism to slavery through food and housing redlining, mass incarceration, and surveillance — must repair the harm done.”

Everett L. Worthington, Jr., The New Science of Forgiveness

The Greater Good Magazine, September 2004

https://greatergood.berkeley.edu/article/item/the_new_science_of_forgiveness

Worthington explains the tremendous health and social benefits that come from the practice of forgiveness. If you prefer a more academic discussion of this same argument and don’t mind in-text citations, read: Everett L. Worthington Jr. & Michael Scherer, “Forgiveness is an emotion focused coping strategy that can reduce health risks and promote health resilience”, *Psychology & Health*, 19:3, 385-405 (2004), <https://greatergood.berkeley.edu/images/uploads/Worthington-ForgivenessCopingStrategy.pdf>

PODCASTS

All Rev’d Up: Episode Three: Thou Shall (Not) Forgive

(August 2019) <https://allrevdup.org/episodes/thou-shall-not-forgive-s1!52b1c>

From the website description: Reverend Irene Monroe and Reverend Emmett G. Price III “discuss forgiveness as it relates to two notable incidents of violence on the African-American community: The death of Eric Garner on Staten Island at the hands of the New York Police Department, and the mass shooting of congregants and clergy at the Emanuel

African Methodist Episcopal Church in Charleston, SC. Is it OK to forgive in the wake of such unspeakable acts? Is there healing after forgiveness?" (24 minutes)

Ira Glass, Anger and Forgiveness: Five Stories that reveal the societal "trend" toward anger and away from genuine forgiveness.

This American Life, (1995) <https://www.thisamericanlife.org/5/anger-and-forgiveness>

Layli Long Soldier, The Freedom of Real Apologies

An interview with Krista Tippett, On Being, Original Air Date: March 30, 2017, Last Updated: October 4, 2018 <https://onbeing.org/programs/layli-long-soldier-the-freedom-of-real-apologies-oct2018>

From the website description: "Layli Long Soldier is a writer, a mother, a citizen of the United States, and a citizen of the Oglala Lakota Nation. She has a way of opening up this part of her life, and of American life, to inspire self-searching and tenderness. Her award-winning first book of poetry, *WHEREAS*, is a response to the U.S. government's official apology to Native peoples in 2009, which was done so quietly, with no ceremony, that it was practically a secret. Layli Long Soldier offers entry points for us all — to events that are not merely about the past, and to the freedom real apologies might bring."

Cheryl Strayed, Regret and Forgiveness

Oprah's Super Soul Conversations, August 27, 2019, <https://podcastone.com/episode/Oprah-and-Cheryl-Strayed-Regret-and-Forgiveness>

From the website: "In a live interview, Oprah sits down with New York Times best-selling author Cheryl Strayed. ... Oprah and Cheryl discuss the meaning of forgiveness and the importance of vulnerability and regret. Cheryl also talks about turning 50 and why she now puts herself first. Cheryl's best-selling memoir 'Wild,' which recounted her spiritual journey hiking the Pacific Crest Trail, was chosen as an Oprah's Book Club selection and went on to become a critically acclaimed film starring Reese Witherspoon."

VIDEOS

Hector Black, Forgiveness

Storytelling from the Moth, Dec 12, 2014, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hLZ95jFdIH8>

Mr. Black tells a story about the devastating loss of his adopted daughter Patricia and how he and his family managed to forgive. This story includes explicit mention of physical and sexual violence. It is not an easy story. (18 minutes)

Can You Forgive Petunia Dursley

Vanessa Zoltan and Casper ter Kuile, Harry Potter and the Sacred Text: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=iMx006_w29I

A short video (2 minutes) about a character from the Harry Potter series that asks us to consider the story from a new perspective.

Forgiveness: How Do Children Forgive?

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fzKAerj8xKE&feature=related>

A very short video (1:30 minutes) about why children seem to forgive so easily.

Dalai Lama, The Power of Forgiveness

(University of Limerick, 2011) <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=aWXkZjx1YwM>

A very long video (an hour and 10 minutes) featuring a talk by the Dalai Lama on forgiveness and inner peace.

Elizabeth Lesser: Why Is It So Hard To Ask For — And Offer — Forgiveness?

Ted Radio Hour, May 12, 2017, <https://www.npr.org/2017/05/12/527942398/elizabeth-lesser-why-is-it-so-hard-to-ask-for-and-offer-forgiveness>

From the NPR description: Before donating bone marrow to her sister — Elizabeth Lesser and her sister undertook a process of seeking forgiveness from each other. She says forgiveness is hard but necessary for our well-being.

Sarah Montana, Why Forgiveness is Worth It

Tedx Lincoln Square, March 2018,

https://www.ted.com/talks/sarah_montana_the_real_risk_of_forgiveness_and_why_it_s_worth_it?language=en

From the youtube description: Forgiveness is tricky. Everyone says you should forgive, but no one will tell you how, exactly, to do it. And is it always possible—even for something as traumatic as gun violence? In this vulnerable and heartfelt talk, writer Sarah Montana takes us through her journey of forgiving her family’s killer. She offers an inside look at what we risk when we choose to forgive, and a hopeful glimpse of the freedom that lies on the other side of grief.

Tig Notaro, R2 Where Are You?

Storytelling from the Moth, November 28, 2014

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dXRSPlhx5ao&app=desktop>

A comedian must build a new relationship with her stepfather after her mother's sudden death. This one is both funny and heartbreaking.

PBS NewsHour, Healing wounds of Rwanda's genocide through reconciliation

May 28, 2014, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=G422U9faPSg>

From the YouTube description: “Twenty years after nearly a million Tutsis were killed the genocide in Rwanda, many Hutus — who were driven out in retribution — are returning to their communities. To facilitate the integration, many small groups are bringing

rapprochement between pairs of genocide survivors and perpetrators. Special correspondent Fred de Sam Lazaro reports on Rwanda's journey toward healing and forgiveness.” (9 minutes)

BOOKS

Anne Lamott, *Hallelujah Anyway: Rediscovering Mercy* (2017)

"Mercy is radical kindness," says Anne Lamott. It's the permission you give others—and yourself—to forgive a debt, to absolve the unabsolvable, to let go of the judgment and pain that make life so difficult.

William Martin, *The Tao of Forgiveness*, (New York: 2010)

Martin offers stories and practices that help readers partake in the "healing power of forgiving others and yourself."

Kristin Neff, *Self-Compassion: The Proven Power of Being Kind to Yourself* (2015)

Neff offers advice on how to limit self-criticism and offset its negative effects, including exercises and action plans for dealing with emotional struggles and the numerous trials of everyday living.

Martha Nussbaum, *Anger and Forgiveness: Resentment, Generosity, Justice* (2018)

From the website: "Is forgiveness the best way of transcending anger? Nussbaum examines different conceptions of this much-sentimentalized notion, both in the Jewish and Christian traditions and in secular morality. Some forms of forgiveness are ethically promising, she claims, but others are subtle allies of retribution: those that exact a performance of contrition and abasement as a condition of waiving angry feelings."

Sharon Risher, *For Such a Time as This: Hope & Forgiveness After the Charleston Massacre* (2019)

Written by a chaplain whose mother and two cousins were murdered at the Emanuel AME Church in Charleston, this book explains how Risher found a way away from bitterness and into forgiveness.

Miriam Toews, *Women Talking* (2019)

Based on the true story of a series of harrowing assaults that befell women in the Mennonite Manitoba Colony in Bolivia. Hundreds of women, in what was known as the "ghost rapes," were drugged and raped by the men in their colony, many of whom were friends and family members. Toews' novel takes up in the aftermath of the rapes. The women of the Molotschna colony gather in a hayloft to plot their course of action in the brief window of time that the men are away bailing the rapists out of jail. What follows is a chorus of female voices deliberating on the nature of forgiveness, goodness, love, revenge, and the way to chart a path to a new future.

Movies

"Antwone Fisher" with Denzel Washington (2011)

"The Descendants" with George Clooney (2015)

This packet has been created by Kathryn Jay using the Soul Matters Model of Small Groups. For use at Unity Unitarian Church only.



<https://www.soulmatterssharingcircle.com/>