

Unitarian Universalist Small Group Ministry Network Website  
**"Forgiveness"**  
A Covenant Group Curriculum, River of Grass Unitarian Universalist  
Congregation, Davie, FL

**Opening Meditation/Music/Silence/Chalice Lighting** (whichever one(s) you choose to do)

**Opening Words:**

"Not only is love for the giving, it is also forgiving."

*-Wedding Liturgy*

**Check-in/Sharing**

**Topic/Readings:**

"Increasingly, psychological research has begun to show that being a forgiving person is essential to happiness. Even when someone wrongs you, feeling anger or hatred only causes your life to descend into misery and resentment: You are the one who suffers, not the person you're angry at. Forgiving, on the other hand, can lift the burden. When Buddha and Jesus and other great spiritual figures taught us to forgive those who sin against us, they weren't just pronouncing holy philosophy. Rather, they were giving practical down-to-earth life advice. Among a number of other recent studies, a study of elderly women, published in the journal *Psychotherapy*, found that those who scored well on a standard test of forgiveness traits had higher self-esteem and fewer episodes of anxiety and depression compared to those who scored poorly. {But} None of this makes forgiveness a panacea... {Indeed...} when people have first suffered a wrong or a tragic loss, it's often pointless to speak of forgiveness immediately: that can only come with time."

*- Gregg Easterbrook*

"I went around saying for a long time that I am not one of those... who is heavily into forgiveness. But, they say we are not punished for the sin, but by the sin, and I began to feel punished by my unwillingness to forgive. By the time I decided to become one of those who is heavily into forgiveness, it was like trying to become a marathon runner in middle age; everything inside me either recoiled, as from a hot flame, or laughed a little too hysterically. I tried to will myself into forgiving people who had harmed me directly or indirectly over the years—four former Presidents, three relatives, two old boyfriends, and one teacher in a pear tree—it was 'The Twelve Days of Christmas' meets *Taxi Driver*. But in the end I could only pretend I had. I decided I was starting off with my sights aimed too high. As C.S. Lewis says in *Mere Christianity*, "If we really want to learn forgiveness, perhaps we had better start with something easier than the Gestapo."

*- Anne Lamott*

**Facilitator:** Please read these quotes aloud and ask the folks assembled to reflect on the theme of forgiveness. Why do people think that many of worlds' religions stress forgiveness as a central spiritual act? What does it feel like to ask for/be granted forgiveness? Do they find it more difficult to seek forgiveness or to offer it?

**Likes and Wishes/Feedback**

**Closing Words:**

“Nothing worth doing is completed in our lifetime; Therefore we are saved by hope.  
Nothing true or beautiful or good makes complete sense in any immediate context of history;  
Therefore we are saved by faith.  
Nothing we do, however, virtuous, can be accomplished alone; Therefore, we are saved by love.”  
No virtuous act is quite as virtuous from the standpoint of our friend or foe as from our own;  
Therefore, we are saved by the final form of love which is forgiveness.”

*- Reinhold Niebuhr*

Amen. May you live in blessing.