

## **Forgiveness**

The Community Church of Chapel Hill Unitarian Universalist, Rev. Maj-Britt Johnson,  
March 2010

### **Opening words and Chalice lighting**

*“Forgiveness is not always easy. At times, it feels more painful than the wound we suffered, to forgive the one that inflicted it. And yet, there is no peace without forgiveness.” - Marianne Williamson*

### **Check in:**

For the one hour drop-in groups: A brief check in such as “how is it with your spirit today?”

For the two hour covenant groups: What you share may be about your physical or spiritual health, cares or concerns for loved ones, issues you are facing. Each person in the group speaks uninterrupted for approximately \_\_\_\_ minutes.

**Introducing the topic of forgiveness:** (thoughts and quotes assembled by Maj-Britt Johnson)

When we can't forgive it is because there is some unfairness or injustice we believe has yet to be addressed. But when we won't, or can't, forgive it's like we are actually the ones in limbo, waiting for a punishment to come down on someone else, or on a group. It's as if we are sitting vigil inside ourselves. When we are in that waiting/limbo we feel the slow burning of resentment or the hot flames of anger.

There is much wisdom about how holding on to resentment and anger only hurts ourselves. Such as this from the Buddha:

*“Holding on to anger is like grasping a hot coal with the intent of throwing it at someone else; you are the one who gets burned.”*

And from Master Cheng Yen:

*“To be angry is to let others' mistakes punish yourself. To forgive others is to be good to yourself”.*

**Questions** – choose the one that speaks to you:

-Is there anything that you would like to be forgiven for? What do you feel when you think of this?

How easy or difficult is it for you to forgive yourself?

Is there any person or group that you would like to forgive?

What would make it easier for you forgive another? What makes it difficult?

What does forgiveness mean to you?

**Guidelines for Sharing** – (leader reads these guidelines, or has another person do it, then can repeat the questions again)

We'll each speak for roughly \_\_\_\_\_ minutes, with no cross talk or interruptions. Cross talk means advice giving, blaming or trying to fix another person. It is wise to speak in the first person, "I think, I feel..."

When we are listening: Try to listen to each other as if you were listening to, or watching, your own thoughts. Let others' words simply fall down into your heart. It is not necessary to give the person reassurances that they are being heard, such as nodding or eye contact. By simply listening together we create a holding space for each speaker. Comfort and care can be offered after the group session.

When it is your turn to speak it is not necessary to respond to the persons who have gone before you, though you may find yourself building on what has been shared already. Find out what your own inner wisdom wants to say. Together we create a quilt of wisdom, the design is a surprise.

(Leader can re-read the questions here)

**-Sharing around the circle**

-After everyone has shared (some groups go around twice, or more)...

**Likes and Wishes** – What did you like about this session? What would you wish to be different if anything?

**-Closing words** – *"Sincere forgiveness isn't colored with expectations that the other person apologize or change. Don't worry whether or not they finally understand you. Love them and release them. Life feeds back truth to people in its own way and time."*

*-Sara Paddison*