

Unforgivable?

First Unitarian Church of Wilmington, Delaware, by Rev. Michelle Collins, 2013

Chalice Lighting, by Marianne Williamson

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.

Check In

Reading: What Does Forgiveness Mean, author unknown

I don't know what forgiveness means. Two and a half years ago, I discovered that my husband of 31 years was having an affair with a co-worker. When I found out the level of his involvement, I told him to leave our home. The details are sordid and still unbelievable to me and our adult children. We have since gotten a legal separation, and he is on reasonably good terms with two of our three kids. My life is on track, and I have weathered this quite well in most ways, except that I am still angry with him. In the past two years, I have heard the word "forgive" too many times. I have heard many definitions and been told that in order to move on completely, I need to forgive him. My brain understands that I need to put that part of my past away, lay that burden down, but I cannot forgive him. I wish there were another word for the process I need to go through. Forgiveness to me includes giving permission, or acknowledgment that the action was okay or in some way not that bad. The betrayal of my husband was not and will never be okay. If there is a word to better describe the process of putting the past in the past without the underlying approval, I don't know what it is. I don't like the word forgive anymore. I believe that there are situations and people that can't be forgiven. When I discovered that quite a large part of my life was a lie, my understanding of the way the world works was overturned. What does forgiveness mean? I don't know.

(excerpt from "Forgiveness" on Tapestry by Mary Hynes, CBC Radio, April 29, 2012 episode)

Discussion & Sharing Questions:

- When is forgiveness hardest to do?
- Does forgiveness necessarily mean condoning the action in some way? Is there something else to call it, like the author of today's reading requests?
- Are there things that are impossible for you to forgive? What does it take to be unforgivable? What has been your experience with these unforgivable situations?
- Should forgiveness always be a goal? Why or why not? Can there be a sense of peace and "moving on" without forgiveness?

Closing Thoughts & Extinguishing the Chalice