

Starr King School for the Ministry

FORGIVENESS

Fall 2011

Syllabus

Forgiveness honors the heart's greatest dignity.
Whenever we are lost, it brings us back to the ground of love.
With forgiveness we become unwilling to attack
or wish harm to another.

Whenever we forgive, in small ways at home,
or in great ways between nations,
we free ourselves from the past.

-- Jack Kornfield

Without forgiveness, there really is no future.

-- Bishop Desmond Tutu

He (she) who is devoid of the power to forgive,
is devoid of the power to love.

-- Martin Luther King, Jr.

Course Description: In this year-long, on-line class we will meet people all over the world, from a variety of religious and cultural traditions, who have practiced forgiveness as a means of healing, peace and liberation. Through readings, films, and spiritual exercises we will develop our own "forgiveness muscles" and deepen our spiritual practice. We will also explore ways of using forgiveness to strengthen our pastoral, prophetic and public ministries. This class will be experiential, drawing on personal narratives, science, psychology, practical theology and the wisdom and practices of Judaism, Christianity, Islam and Buddhism.

Fall semester will focus primarily on the development of interpersonal and pastoral skills in forgiveness (e.g., in our relationships, families, congregations, workplaces and communities as well as at times of stress and crises). The need to repent, make amends and forgive ourselves will also be addressed. Spring semester will examine the role of forgiveness, reconciliation and/or moral repair in the wake of wrongdoing and injustice on a larger and/or institutional scale (e.g., racism, sexual abuse in the church, war, economic injustice, genocide and environmental disasters). We will also explore whether and how to forgive God.

Course Objectives: By the end of Fall semester, students will be able to: (1) describe in their own words what forgiveness is and is not; (2) explain how a grievance story is created; (3) cite examples of how forgiveness promotes health and well-being; (4) identify scriptures and practices in their own and others' traditions regarding forgiveness; (5) describe their progress in applying forgiveness

in their own lives and ministries; (6) listen and support others in their journeys toward forgiveness; and (7) discern when forgiveness is being rushed, forced, or false.

Course Requirements, Texts & Films: The primary expectation - and hope - of this course is that students develop and/or deepen their spiritual practice of forgiveness and support others in doing the same. This will be accomplished through weekly on-line forums, including: a Practice Circle, and Readings, Films & Conversation. Over the course of the semester, students will be asked to reflect on and help lead the discussion of at least three of the following personal narratives (other texts may be substituted on occasion with the permission of the instructor):

Cannino-Thompson, Jennifer & Ronald Cotton. Picking Cotton: Our Memoir of Injustice & Redemption (2009) ISBN 0312376537 \$25.95

Einhorn, Lois & Arun Gandhi. Forgiveness and Child Abuse: Would YOU Forgive? (2010) ISBN 1931741697 \$22.95

Khamisa, Azim. Azim's Bardo: A Father's Journey from Murder to Forgiveness (1998) ISBN 0933670028 \$23.00

Kraybill, Donald et. al. Amish Grace: How Forgiveness Transcended Tragedy (2007) ISBN 9780787997618 \$24.95

Moran, Martin. The Tricky Part: A Boy's Story of Sexual Trespass, A Man's Journey to Forgiveness (2005) ISBN 0307276538 \$18.95

Raybon, Patricia. My First White Friend: Confessions on Race, Love and Forgiveness (1996) ISBN 0670859567 \$15.00

Sapienza, Salvatore. Seventy Times Seven (Catholic gay man, fiction, 2006) ISBN 1560235993 \$15.00

Weitzel, Diana Marie. Fall Into Freedom: An Affair Inspires One Woman's Search for Truth (2006) ISBN 0967144809 \$24.95

In addition, all students are asked to watch the film "The Power of Forgiveness" by Martin Doblmeier (2008) [ASIN: B000YVB2N, \$20.88] as early in the semester as possible. Students will also be expected to watch and post short reviews on at least two other films [see FILMS for suggestions].

Course Instructor: This on-line course will be taught by Christine Fry, an ordained Unitarian Universalist minister and SKSM ('96) graduate. Chris has taught a variety of classes at Starr King including: Forgiveness; Poetry, Illness & Pastoral Care; Health & Healing; Religious Education; Compassion & Moral Repair; and Spiritual Practice for These Times. This will be her second on-line course. In addition to

teaching, Chris' ministry includes spiritual direction and facilitating "Write for Health" groups in her home town of Davis, California. She is an active member of the Davis United Methodist Church and involved in the Interfaith Rotating Winter Shelter and Celebration of Abraham. Chris lives with her husband, Isao Fujimoto, who is a community activist and a professor of Community Development and Asian American Studies at U.C. Davis. Their daughter, Esumi, is starting her first semester at New York University this fall.

Office Hours: Chris will be available to meet with students individually through email (revcfry@aol.com), by phone and, on occasion, in person. Students are asked to contact Chris through email to make arrangements for phone or in-person meetings. Monday - Wednesdays will be the best time to reach her.

Fall Calendar

September 5: WHAT IS FORGIVENESS?

September 12: GRIEVANCE STORIES

September 19: FAMILY FEUDS & OTHER ESTRANGEMENTS

September 26: BETRAYALS & INFIDELITY

Text: Fall Into Freedom: An Affair Inspires One Woman's Search for Truth

October 3: ANGER & REVENGE

October 10: FORGIVENESS AS A SPIRITUAL PRACTICE

Text/Film: Amish Grace

October 17: FORGIVENESS AS A CHOICE

Texts: The Tricky Part; & Forgiveness and Child Abuse: Would YOU Forgive?

October 24: READING WEEK

October 31: FORGIVENESS & JUSTICE

Text/Film: Azim's Bardo: A Father's Journey from Murder to Forgiveness

November 7: FORGIVENESS, RACISM & HOMOPHOBIA

Texts: My First White Friend: Confessions on Race, Love and Forgiveness; and Seventy Times Seven

November 14: FORGIVENESS, RAPE & RACISM

Text: Picking Cotton: Our Memoir of Injustice and Redemption

November 21: FORGIVENESS & REPENTANCE

November 28: APOLOGIES & AMENDS

December 5: LEARNING TO FORGIVE OURSELVES

December 12: SUMMING UP - OUR FORGIVENESS JOURNEY THUS FAR

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