

FORGIVENESS

Fall 2012

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 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, workplaces and communities). Spring semester will examine the role of forgiveness in the wake of wrong-doing and injustice on a larger, historical and/or institutional scale. In both instances we will also explore and work with the "relatives" of forgiveness: restorative justice, reconciliation, repentance, repair and non-violence.

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 or forced.

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, especially "Practice Circle" and "Readings, Films & Query." 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 some films and/or read books related to the class' weekly themes (6 films or 4 books or some combination thereof). [A list of suggested films and books will be available in August 2012.]

Course Instructor: This on-line course is 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. In addition to teaching, Chris facilitates "Write for Health" groups in her home town of Davis, California. She is a member and Chair of Worship Ministry at the Davis United Methodist Church. Chris lives with her husband, Isao Fujimoto, who is a community activist and professor of Community Development and Asian American Studies at U.C. Davis. Their daughter, Esumi, is in her second year at New York University.

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

Fall Calendar

September 4

THE POWER OF FORGIVENESS

Query: What is – and is not – forgiveness?

September 11

GRIEVANCE STORIES

Query: What is a grievance story? How can it be dismantled?

September 18

SWEET REVENGE

Query: What is revenge? What makes it so seductive, and so costly?

September 25

STEPS TO FORGIVENESS

Query: Is forgiveness a skill that can be learned? How? What about grace?

October 2

FORGIVENESS AS A SPIRITUAL PRACTICE

Query: What practices can help ready us to forgive?

October 9

FORGIVENESS & FAMILIES

Query: How do we learn and practice forgiveness – or not - in our families?

October 16

AMISH GRACE

Query: What do the Amish teach us about the practice of forgiveness?

October 23

READING WEEK

October 30

INFIDELITY AND BETRAYAL

Query: How do – or should we – forgive infidelity and/or other betrayals in our lives? What if we are the one who has been unfaithful and/or caused harm?

November 6

CHILD ABUSE

Query? Are some people, some acts, unforgivable? When might forgiveness be forced and/or lead to more harm?

November 13

DROPPING OUR STORYLINES

Query: How do we move from grievance stories to stories of kindness, healing and love?

November 20

MY FIRST WHITE FRIEND

Query: How – or do we – forgive in the face of on-going racism? What are the costs of not forgiving?

November 27

FORGIVING OUR BODIES & MINDS

Query: How can we forgive and be kinder to our bodies and minds?

December 4

FORGIVING OURSELVES

Query: How – or do we – forgive ourselves?

December 11

OUR FORGIVENESS JOURNEY SO FAR

Query: Where are we on our forgiveness journey so far?