

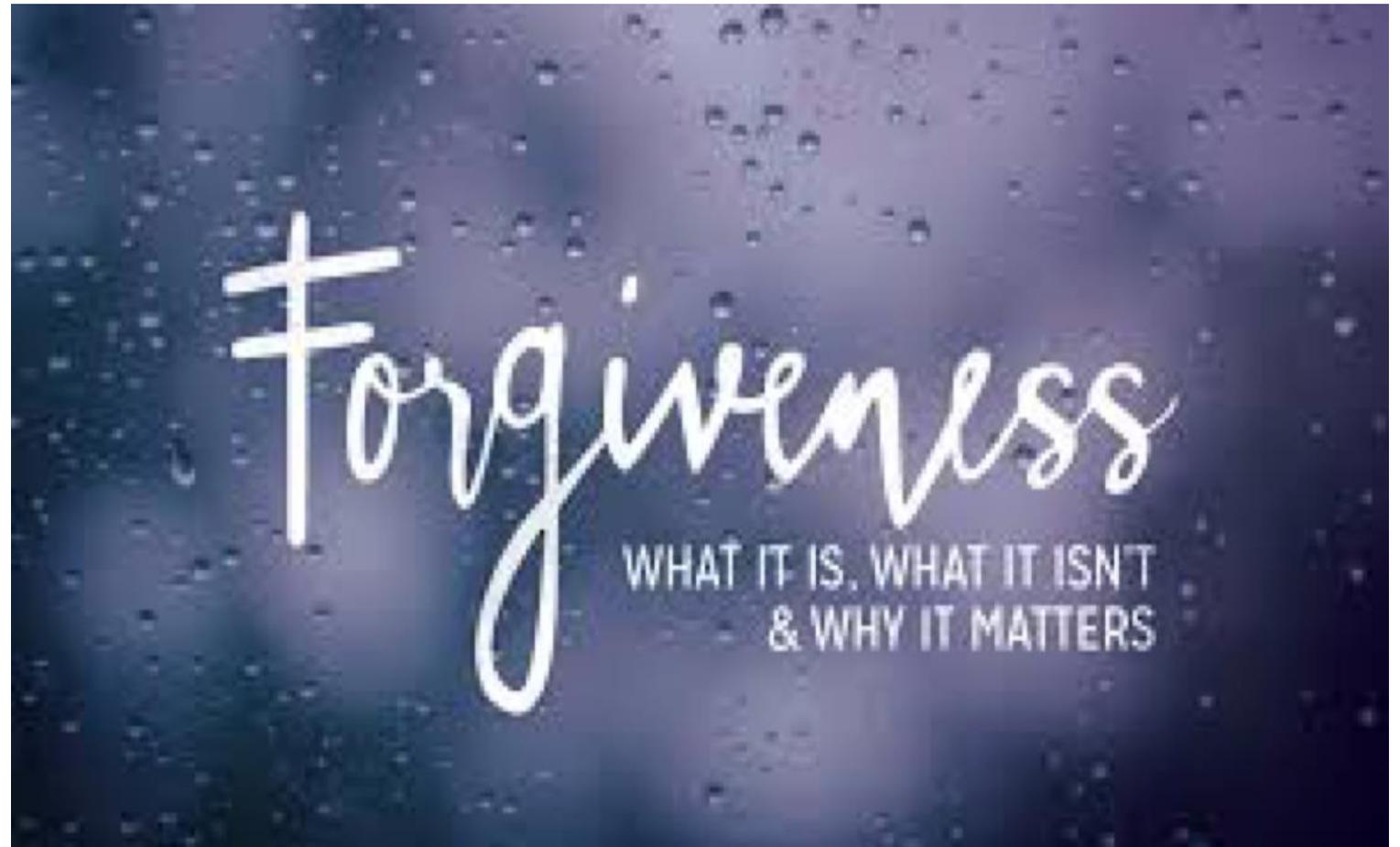
Forgiveness

A Lenten Series
for Renewal and
Contemplative
Action

St. David's Episcopal Church
2020

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Introductory Workshop





Opening Prayer

Beloved and eternally loving One, You are the source of all understanding and beyond all understanding.

Grant in Your joyful and abundant loving way, that we might see You most clearly in the darkneses that we find in our lives.

Free us from the fragility of self so that we may learn together to wear the face of Christ, Your only beloved son, and see each other with the universal vision of your Holy Spirit.

In Christ's name we pray. Amen.

Getting Started

A note about self-care



- We are passionate about the work of forgiveness, and believe strongly that when we forgive we harness what is best in us and what is best *for* us.
- But, sometimes this work can get hard. When that happens, working toward forgiveness becomes the work of caring for ourselves, so that we can keep going.
- Because this workshop and longer series is not therapy, please think about what other resources you might need to feel safe but also confident that you can learn and grow in this work.
- A list of professional supports can be provided to anyone upon request.

Workshop Goals

- Define what forgiveness is from a psychospiritual perspective
- Distinguish forgiveness from other ways of responding to hurt and transgressions
- Have a “roadmap” of how we can disrupt the cycle of revenge by taking the path of forgiving
- Begin to consider whether forgiveness is a practice that may help you



Group Work: Focusing on Why You Are Here

Why is forgiveness a Lenten practice? What are you seeking this Lenten season and how might this series on forgiveness strengthen that?

Where have you learned about forgiveness before now? Who has been able to model forgiveness?

Are there particular things that you see going on in your life, in your church, in the world at large, that makes forgiveness seem particularly relevant and important?



Shedding Misconceptions

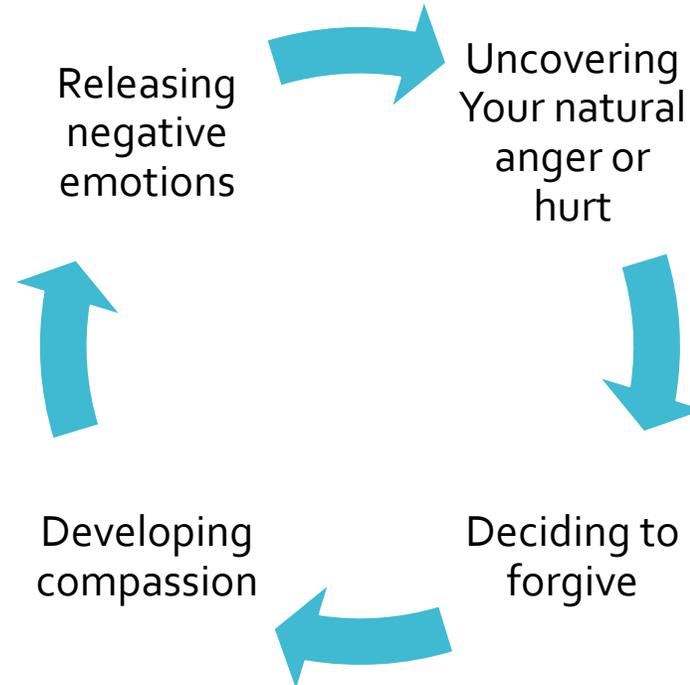
- Experts generally agree that forgiveness is in part a decision against the natural and justified response to seek **revenge**, **sometimes called unforgiveness**.
- Forgiveness does not mean **forgetting**. When you forgive, you do not gloss over or deny the seriousness of an offense against you.
- Forgiveness is not **condoning or excusing** offenses.
- Though forgiveness can help repair a damaged relationship, it doesn't obligate you to **reconcile** with the person who harmed you, or pardon them from legal accountability.

Group Work PAUSE



Forgiveness Defined

Forgiveness is a **conscious, deliberate decision to release feelings of resentment or vengeance** toward a person or group who has harmed you, regardless of whether they actually deserve your forgiveness.

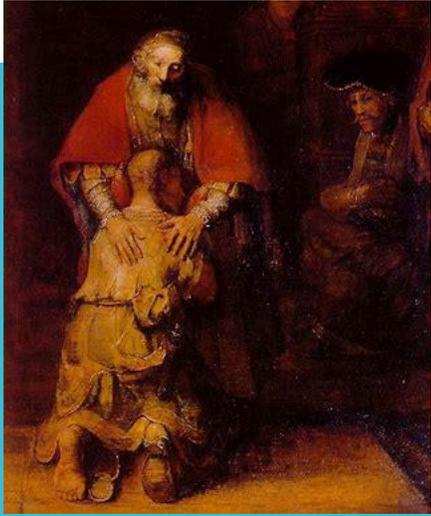


Forgiveness is
a path out of
ourselves and
into a renewed
and common
humanity

“Forgiveness is the name of love among people who love poorly. The hard truth is all people love poorly. We to forgive and be forgiven every day, every hour increasingly. That is the great work of love among the fellowship of the weak that is our human family.”

-Henri J. M. Nouwen

Listen to the story of the woman who lost, then gained, a son. Then learn about the revenge cycle in your workbook. How does forgiveness disrupt the natural desire for justice and retribution this mother feels? How do her decisions reflect the steps shown in your workbook?



Conclusion & critical questions for further reflection

- Look again at the revenge cycle and forgiveness cycle. At what point in the revenge cycle do you most often get stuck? What do you need to make the decision to be more forgiving?
- We have approached forgiveness from the standpoint of forgiving others for doing wrong. What is forgiveness like to receive, as the offending person? Are there things you want to be forgiven for, and how might you start that process during this Lent?
- Similarly, forgiveness is one way to extend compassion and understanding to ourselves. Are there things you may need to forgive yourself for, and how might you begin that process this Lent?