

SEPTEMBER 2011

Forgiveness

Mission of the Unitarian Universalist Church of Santa Clarita

The Unitarian Universalist Church of Santa Clarita Valley enhances the lives of members through spiritual development and active service in the community. We offer a diverse, non-dogmatic spiritual home to all who share our values as defined by the Unitarian Universalist Association. We provide a liberal religious voice, a social justice presence in the Santa Clarita Valley, and a stimulating and supportive environment to help our members on their own spiritual journeys during all stages of their lives.



Forgiveness is a common theme within the world's religious traditions.

At the end of each year Judaism invites personal introspection upon the ways in which we have fallen short of our ideals and might need to atone, to ask for forgiveness, or to grant it.

In Christian tradition the human need for forgiveness is tended through faith in the redeeming sacrifice of Jesus; through the sacraments of Baptism and Communion and, in the Catholic tradition, through the sacrament of Confession (often referred to as "Penance and Reconciliation").

Islam distinguishes between forgiveness granted

by people and that granted by Allah, and points to one circumstance in which forgiveness cannot be granted (idol worship).

Buddhism lifts up the practice of forgiveness as a means to release oneself from harmful attachment to anger and resentment, and to open one's heart to compassion. (Forgiveness is recognized as critical to one's mental well-being.)

Hinduism recognizes forgiveness as a great virtue, capable of clearing the path through Karma to personal spiritual advancement and even divinity.

So much religious emphasis has been and is still placed upon the spiritual need

for and practice of forgiveness - but Unitarian Universalists don't often talk about that element of their lives!

Often, there is a desire to focus on what's going great, as opposed to where we missed the mark. Or, we just want to roll up our sleeves and "set things" right.

But how can we best do that? What's our motivation? What ills are we truly responsible for? How can we atone meaningfully? How can we open our hearts more fully to others?

What do our religious values, our mission and the covenant we share tell us about how to be in right relationship with one another?
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What does forgiveness look like to you?

(Try to doodle or draw it!)

Unitarian Universalists of Santa Clarita Valley



2011

Website: <http://uuofscv.org>

While there are many paths to spiritual growth, it helps to regularly set aside time to think deeply about our experiences and how they relate to our core values. This year each month's worship services at UUofSCV will lift up a particular theological theme for your reflection. You may also choose to engage with that theme by reading some of the books recommended here, watching movies related to the theme, discussing and/or journaling your thoughts, creating art, poetry or music, or engaging in service. May your insights unfold gently and joyfully, inspiring acts of love.

In Awe & Gratitude, Rev. Stefanie (RevSteffi@gmail.com)

SUNDAY, September 25th 10:30 am
INGATHERING WATER COMMUNION



Water is a timeless universal symbol of the life-giving, cleansing power of forgiveness.

The Water Communion is a ritual celebrated by Unitarian Universalists all over the world, honoring our diversity and unity!

On September 25th you are invited to bring with you a few drops of water representing a place or time special to you. Please pour that gift into the pitcher you will find at the entrance before the service, and allow the experience of shared worship to "wash over" you!

The following list of films, books and quotes is a random compilation in which an element of the month's theme, FORGIVENESS, is lifted up.

Your and/or your family may choose to view one or more of these films or read these books together, reflecting upon and discussing with others the theme and it's relationship to your own values!

FORGIVENESS IN MOVIES:

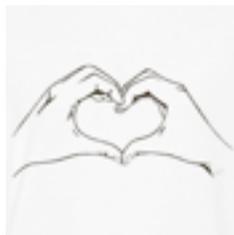
- Amish Grace (PG)
- Rwanda: Living Forgiveness (NA)
- Garden of Forgiveness (NA)
- Deadman Walking (R)
- The Son (NR)
- The Power of Forgiveness (NR)
- The Tale of Desperereaux (G)

FORGIVENESS IN BOOKS FOR ADULTS:

- Amish Grace. By Donald B. Kraybill
- As We Forgive, Stories of Reconciliation from Rwanda. By Catherine Claire Larson
- The Sunflower: On the Possibilities and Limits of Forgiveness. By Simon Wiesenthal
- The Wisdom of Forgiveness. By Dalai Lama
- Forgiving Yourself. By Beverly Flanigan
- Calm Surrender: Walking the Path of Forgiveness. By Kent Nerburn

FORGIVENESS IN BOOKS FOR CHILDREN:

- French Fry Forgiveness. By Nancy Simpson
- This is Just to Say: Poems of Apology & Forgiveness. By Joyce Sidman & Pamela Sagarenski
- Red Blue & Yellow Yarn: A Tale of Forgiveness. By Mirian Kosman
- Learning About Forgiveness from the Life of Nelson Mandela. By Jeanne Strazzabosco



TO CONSIDER:

- Why forgive?
- When is forgiveness difficult?
- When is it easy?
- When is it essential?
- Are you able to ask for forgiveness? Under what circumstances? How does that feel?
- Whom does forgiveness benefit? How?
- What experiences of being forgiven, or of forgiving, have you had?
- Can you forgive yourself?
- Are there different "levels" of forgiveness?
- Which of the Unitarian Universalist Principles would be supported by the practice of forgiveness?

Quotes to ponder:

- ♦ *Forgiveness is the final form of love.* Reinhold Niebuhr
- ♦ *Forgiveness is the key to action and freedom.* Hannah Arendt
- ♦ *Forgiveness is the fragrance that the violet shed on the heel that has crushed it.* Mark Twain
- ♦ *The weak can never forgive. Forgiveness is the attribute of the strong.* Mohandas Gandhi
- ♦ *There is no revenge so complete as forgiveness.* Josh Billings
- ♦ *To forgive is to set a prisoner free and discover that the prisoner was you.* Lewis Smedes
- ♦ *Forgiveness does not deny anger, but faces it head-on.* Alice Duer Miller
- ♦ *Without forgiveness there is no future.* Desmond Tutu

Next month's theme:

In **October** we bear witness to many changes in the natural world: days become shorter and cooler, trees begin to release their hold on leaves. It is a threshold-month, inviting us to step consciously from the verdancy of Summer into the scarcity of Winter. It is a month in which we are reminded that nothing is more constant than change. As a covenanted community we are invited to face faithfully these experiences of **loss, death, grief, fear**. (Other upcoming themes: Faith, Hope, Justice, Love, Brokenness, Transformation, Transcendence)

Have a poem, drawing, book or movie recommendation for next month's issue, or for inclusion in an upcoming worship service?
Want to help organize a movie outing or group discussion or share information about a service project relating to a planned monthly theme?
Contact the Committee on Shared Ministry or Rev. Stefanie (RevSteffi@gmail.com)