

## Branches Themes 2011-2012

### FORGIVENESS

#### Opening Reading / Chalice Lighting

There are 4 stages of forgiveness: 1. to forego – to leave it alone; 2. To forebear – to abstain from punishing; 3. to forget – to aver from memory, to refuse to dwell; 4. to forgive – to abandon the debt. ~Clarissa Pinkola Estes

**Check-In** How goes thy spirit? What do you need to leave behind in order to be fully present here and now? 2-3 sentences Please also take time at this point to introduce yourselves. Suggest that everyone try to remember to wear a nametag so that you can learn everyone's names. If anyone is brand new to the group please ask them to tell us a bit about how long they have been attending All Souls and how they found us the first time.

#### Business

**Revisit Covenant** (Please go over the culture of a Branches group highlighting: space in between speakers, popcorn style/Quaker style sharing, taking care of your own needs, speaking from I, no crosstalk, etc.) **Explain empty chair.**

The culture of your group: Are there things that need to be addressed? Starting and ending time, social opportunities before after meeting or at another date?, your service project inside and outside the church. Please refer to your facilitator manual for more information.

**Tikkun** Service projects are limited to the availability and interest and of the entire group. Please bring ideas for a service project next week.

**Social Meeting** Date? Time? Location? In order to assure the most availability, groups meet two weeks after their Church meeting at the same time at a chosen location.

**Claim time for Deeper Listening** Deeper listening is a time at the end of our meeting where you can be listened to uninterrupted for what is essentially an extended check in if something is going on in your life that you would like to share. You are encouraged to claim time ranging between 3-5 minutes at this time. **Is there anyone who would like to claim time for deeper listening?** Ask for head nods to be sure.

**Centering** Take a moment to breathe, feel your feet on the floor and your body in the chair. After a few minutes, find your heartbeat (either by listening to your ear or placing your fingers on your pulse). See if you can hold the attention of your heartbeat and listen to the sounds in the room. (Leave space for 8-10 breaths) The goal is to bring this sense of calm and way of listening to the readings, and to one another, keeping our attention toggling between self and what you are listening to.

**Readings** (Read through readings and questions twice, one time per facilitator, with reflection space in between followed by Quaker Style sharing. Try to stay in I statements and personal stories and not shift into third person and facts. Try to leave space between speakers.) 26

### **What Forgiveness Means**

by Harold S. Kushner

*A woman in my congregation comes to see me. She is a single mother, divorced, working to support herself and three young children. She says to me, "Since my husband walked out on us, every month is a struggle to pay our bills. I have to tell my kids we have no money to go to the movies, while he's living it up with his new wife in another state. How can you tell me to forgive him?" I answer her, "I'm not asking you to forgive him because what he did was acceptable. It wasn't; it was mean and selfish, I'm asking you to forgive because he doesn't deserve the power to live in your head and turn you into a bitter, angry woman. I'd like to see him out of your life emotionally as completely as he is out of it physically, but you keep holding on to him. You're not hurting him by holding on to that resentment, but you're hurting yourself."*

*....Forgiving happens inside us, it represents a letting go of the sense of grievance, and perhaps most importantly a letting go of the role of victim. For a Jew to forgive the Nazis would not mean, God forbid, saying to them "What you did was understandable, I can understand what led you to do it and I don't hate you for it." It would mean saying "What you did was thoroughly despicable and puts you outside the category of decent human beings. But I refuse to give you the power to define me as a victim. I refuse to let your blind hatred define the shape and content of my Jewishness. I don't hate you; I reject you.' And then the Nazi would remain chained to his past and to his conscience, but the Jew would be free.*

### **Forgiveness**

by the Rev. Greta W. Crosby

*"Forgiveness" is one word but not one act alone. Forgiveness is the process we live through in order to restore a relationship. Forgiveness is the process of coming back together again with another or with oneself after a separation based on wrongdoing or grievous shortcoming. Sometimes the wrongdoing is the separation. Forgiveness involves the acknowledgment and, where possible, the mutual recognition of what went wrong, of what we are doing to right the balance, and especially of the meaning and importance of the relationship. Forgiving is not forgetting. Forgiving is anchoring a wrong in its own time, letting it recede into the past as we live and move toward the future.*

## **Questions**

- 1. What does forgiveness mean to you?**
- 2. Can you think of a time in your life when you chose not to forgive? Share your story.**
- 3. Can you think of a time when someone forgave you?**
- 4. Can you simply decide to forgive?**
- 5. How do you know when you have truly forgiven? What does it feel like to forgive? To be forgiven? What does it feel like to not forgive? To not be forgiven?**
- 6. Have you ever thought you had forgiven and later discovered otherwise? Share your story.**
- 7. Is it better to forgive and forget or to forgive and remember?**
- 8. What is the cost of not forgiving?**

## **Deeper Listening**

If time is claimed by an individual, group listens to speaker uninterrupted for that designated time. It is best to have a timer of sorts so that facilitator can listen fully as well.

## **Check Out**

One sentence about where you are now that we have been together for the past hour and a half. (How did you show up? Would you share more or less? Would you do anything differently? Focus your likes and dislikes on your own behavior.) Please state your name again for the group so that we might have yet another opportunity to put faces to names.

## **Closing reading/Chalice Extinguishing**

Forgiveness is the economy of the heart...Forgiveness saves expense of anger, the cost of hatred, and the waste of spirits. ~Hannah Moore 28

## **Forgiveness Evaluation**

Sit down with your co-facilitator immediately following the session and reflect on the following questions. Please take a few notes so that you can discuss this session at the next facilitator connection circle.

1. How was the covenanting process? Troubles? Concerns?
  
2. Did you feel as though the components were well explained and that the model was followed?
  
3. Were there distractions in the group that may have prevented whole listening?
  
4. How do you feel the group connected? Who are your potential facilitators if your group births another group?
  
5. Did the group connect with the topic?
  
6. Anything else that you feel you need to bring up to the Facilitator Circle?
  
7. What was your experience in the circle this time? How were you ministering? Being ministered to?
  
8. Total attendance\_\_\_\_\_
  
9. Missing and need to be called