

Session 12: Forgiveness and Letting Go

Session 12: Forgiveness and Letting Go

Session Metadata	
Session	12
Title	Forgiveness and Letting Go
UU Source	World Religions
Unit	4th Source: World Religions
Head / Hands / Heart	Heart
Has Exercise	No
Has Ritual	No
Has Spiritual Practice Presentation	Yes
Special Blocks	None

Preparation

Email to Participants

For our next session on [date], we will undertake the vast task of forgiveness.



Wisdom from the world's religions which inspire us in our ethical and spiritual life.

UUA

Forgiveness is a core spiritual need that all religions address: in Islam, one of the names for God in the Quran is *Al-Ghafoor, The Most Forgiving*; in Christianity, Jesus died so that our sins would be forgiven; for Buddhists, forgiveness is necessary for internal harmony; Mahabharata, a Hindu text, states, "forgiveness is Brahma [God]; forgiveness is truth."

Thich Nhat Hanh is a Buddhist Monk who writes in *You Are Here*:

"Conflict and suffering are often caused by a person not wanting to surrender his concepts and ideas of things. In the relationship between a father and a son, for example, or between partners, this happens all the time. It is important to train yourself to let go of your ideas about things. Freedom is cultivated by this practice of letting go. If you look deeply, you may find that you are holding on to a concept that is causing you to suffer a great deal. Are you intelligent enough, are you free enough, to give up this idea?"

“I am becoming calm,

I am letting go.

Having let go, victory is mine.

I smile.

I am free.

Hanh, Thich Nhat. *You Are Here* (pp. 76-77). Shambhala.

So what are we to do with forgiveness as Unitarian Universalists? UU minister Rev. Kate Tucker's sermon on forgiveness opens up the topic with wisdom and depth; the Forgiveness Project website shares real stories of what forgiveness looks like in people's lives. Hanh describes letting go, which doesn't change that you care deeply, but that you recognize when letting go allows a detachment or freedom from yearning and control. But as with all deeply spiritual concepts, the real work for this topic is your own reflection about forgiveness, your own need to heal and let go.

Readings

- Listen to "[A Pattern So Vast](#)" sermon by Rev. Kate Tucker (24 minutes)

- Read some true [stories about forgiveness](#) from people all over the world, from all religious traditions.
- Read “[Dreaming Accountability](#)” by Mia Mingus.

Reflection Questions

- Write a personal reflection that starts with, “In my life, forgiveness ...”
- What resonated as true for you in Rev. Kate Tucker’s sermon?
- What similarities did you notice in the stories from The “Forgiveness Project?” How might the wisdom you find there inspire your own spiritual undertaking of forgiveness?
- Thich Nhat Hanh writes that “conflict and suffering are often caused by a person not wanting to surrender [their] concepts and ideas of things.” How does this Buddhist practice of letting go inform your understanding/expression of forgiveness?
- How does “dreaming accountability” affect our ability to practice forgiveness?
- Where is forgiveness most needed in your life? What practices might help you with forgiving or being forgiven?

Thinking of you all and looking forward to our time together.

Session Plan

Chalice Lighting and Silence

Our opening reading is a poem by Rick Fields, d. 1999.

“ Behind the hardness there is fear

And if you touch the heart of the fear

You find sadness

And if you touch the sadness

You find the vast blue sky

-Rick Fields

Let’s take a few minutes of silence to bring ourselves fully into this circle.

Check-In

What are you carrying in your heart tonight? How is your spiritual practice or spiritual companionship going?

Covenant Review

Use whatever process your group has established to stay current with the covenant.

Is there anything about the covenant that we should address?

Spiritual Practice Presentation

Reflection

- How did you finish this writing prompt: “In my life, forgiveness ...”
- What resonated as true for you in Rev. Kate Tucker’s sermon?
- Thich Nhat Hanh writes that “conflict and suffering are often caused by a person not wanting to surrender [their] concepts and ideas of things.” How does this Buddhist practice of letting go inform your understanding/expression of forgiveness?
- What similarities did you notice in the stories from The Forgiveness Project? How might the wisdom you find there inspire your own spiritual undertaking of forgiveness, whether your hurts are small or large?
- Where is forgiveness most needed in your life? What practices might help you forgive or be forgiven?

So What?

How does this reflection relate to your spiritual journey? What are you inspired or challenged to do next?

Gratitude and Closing

Have everyone focus on the chalice. Each person, as moved, says one or two words about something from this session for which they are grateful or how they are feeling in this moment. You can also invite people to share a word about what they are letting go of during this forgiveness process as a closing. After everyone has said a word, close with a brief statement of thanks and appreciation.

Revision #2

Created 2026-03-27 23:54:19 CET by Rev. Sean Neil-Barron

Updated 2026-03-27 23:59:00 CET by Rev. Sean Neil-Barron