

Gathering for Forgiveness

This Gathering has suggestions for introducing sections. Some sections use a timer / clock.

Words of the Day

As people arrive, ask them to write the Words of the Day and put them in the basket.

I would like to be able to forgive . . .

Opening

Chalice Lighting *“We’ll begin with the chalice lighting.” Ask for a volunteer.*

Blessed is the fire that burns deep in the soul. It is the flame of the human spirit touched into being by the mystery of life. It is the fire of reason; the fire of compassion; the fire of community; the fire of justice; the fire of faith. It is the fire of love burning deep in the human heart; the divine glow in every life. *Eric A. Heller-Wagner*

The Basket *“Now we’ll read the Words of the Day. I’ll start and pass to the right (left).”*

Being Together

Sharing of Joys and Concerns *“We’ll share joys and concerns. I’ll begin. Will you go next?”*

Silence, holding each other in support *“Now a few minutes of silence” (2 or 3 minutes)*

Shared Readings *“I’ll start the first Shared Reading. Will you go next?”*

As I walked out the door toward the gate that would lead to my freedom, I knew if I didn’t leave my bitterness and hatred behind, I’d still be in prison. *Nelson Mandela*

Every act of forgiveness mends something broken in this fractured world. It is a step, however small, in the long, hard journey to redemption. *Rabbi Sacks*

I want to be the kind of person who can do that. Move on and forgive people and be healthy and happy. It seems like an easy thing to do in my head. But it’s not so easy when you try it in real life.

Susane Colasanti

Forgiveness has nothing to do with absolving a criminal of his crime. It has everything to do with relieving oneself of the burden of being a victim – letting go of the pain and transforming oneself from victim to survivor. *C.R. Strahan*

Be courageous enough to forgive yourself; never forget to be compassionate to yourself.

Debasish Mridha

Listen. Slide the weight from your shoulders and move forward. You are afraid you might forget, but you never will. You will forgive and remember. *Barbara Kingsolver*

Forgiveness is not the misguided act of condoning irresponsible, hurtful behavior. Nor is it a superficial turning of the other cheek that leaves us feeling victimized and martyred. Rather it is the finishing of old business that allows us to experience the present, free of contamination from the past. *Joan Borysenko*

I never knew how strong I was until I had to forgive someone who wasn't sorry, and accept an apology I never received. *Shannon L. Adler*

Throughout life people will make you mad, disrespect you and treat you bad.
Let God deal with the things they do, cause hate in your heart will consume you too. *Will Smith*

The practice of forgiveness is our most important contribution to the healing of the world.
Marianne Williamson

Deep Listening and Sharing

Round 1. Deep Sharing. *“Now we share reflections on Forgiveness and the preparation.” Begin, or if you're not ready, ask who can go first.*

Round 2. Responses and Comments. *After all have shared or passed, check the time. Say “We have about __ minutes for a 2nd round.” Begin your response or ask who can start.*

Closing

Closing Circle *“We'll go around the circle and say a word or sentence about what we are taking away from the session. I'll go first, and would you be willing to go next?”*

Chalice *“Now we extinguish the chalice.” Read in unison or ask for a volunteer.*

We extinguish this flame and we remember the warmth of our community, the light of our wisdom, the generosity of our sharing. We keep these in our heart until we meet again.

Song/Chime *Ask for a volunteer.*

Announcements

The Covenant

I commit myself:

- to come to meetings when I possibly can, knowing that my presence is important to the group
- to let the facilitator know if I will be absent or need to quit
- to share responsibility for good process by watching how much time I take to speak, noticing what is going on for others, and considering problems if they occur
- to do the reading and thinking about the topic ahead of time
- to not gossip about what is shared in the group, and tell only my own story to others
- to honor the safety of the group by listening to what others share with an open heart
- to refrain from cross-talk, judging, giving advice, or advocating a specific view
- to share as deeply as I can when it is my turn and to stay on the “I-message.”