

# Friends of Unity

November 25, 2023

Dear Ones.

In 2020 I embarked upon a journey I thought would involve one year of interviews, synthesis of input, community exploration of the input, and finally a public release of our insights and perspectives. As the new spiritual leader at Friends of Unity, I was motivated to meet more of the folks and create a deeper conversation about spirituality and the questions we all process about life, living and relationships. But 2020 included significant change: the global pandemic and hundreds of thousands of deaths; confusion, anger, and blame; racial reckoning and murders in the communities across the United States; and, a presidential election that was vehemently contested by the outgoing president, an insurrection, and an increasing sense of polarization in our country. 2021 was equally as difficult with economic fallout from the pandemic, and surges of covid worldwide. In 2022 I was to synthesize interview insights, and begin sharing with the larger community.

As I think back over the last three years and finish 2023, I see a country and a world that struggles to know how to work with differences, grievances, and ultimately love. I marvel at this exploration of a significant soul question, "What is forgiveness?", and the number of years it has been so present in my mind and heart as a spiritual leader. I have questioned my delay in finishing the synthesis but now I see a timely connection to our current study and exploration of The Sacred Human at Friends of Unity. The insights lifted from the interviews and contained in this synthesis are deeply meaningful. I read them as a raw treatise to be studied and shared. Guidance to answers for our persistent questions about living spiritually, love, and the illusive potential for improving life on the planet, are revealed.

Sitting with so many who have studied in Unity for years, perhaps it is not a surprise that no one had a sense of God forgiving them, or, God doing the forgiving. And, most had few, or, no examples of someone forgiving them. I am heartened by this; it is evidence of integration of the indwelling reality of that which we call God. God that is always ready to be expressed through us. It is like treasure buried within and when once discovered, we open our hearts to the power of God and the ability to create heaven on earth. May all who read this find personal insight and revelation.

Love, Kathy Harwood Long, Senior Minister

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*"WHAT IS FORGIVENESS"*

## **SOUL GUIDING QUESTION FOR 2020: What is forgiveness?**

This primary question led to the following questions in the interviews:

Have you forgiven others? Have you forgiven yourself? Has anyone forgiven you?

First interview: 2/4/2020. Last interview: 11/2/21. Community exploration 2022.

(Page numbers are for Kathy's reference only; all insights are anonymously published)

### **QUESTIONS RELATED TO FORGIVENESS:**

Pg. 29: Sometimes I just don't know why people are mean.

Pg. 11: the way I forgave is by foregoing expectations; if I wanted to have a relationship I had to not be known as a differentiated individual—is that forgiveness? I don't know.

Pg. 12: how do you forgive yourself for something you don't know that you did?

Pg. 12: maybe forgiveness and acceptance are the same thing?

Pg 7: The process is seeing it—then let it go? How?

Pg. 15: times when I wonder whether I've truly forgiven. Noticed for a long time the thought 'you really messed us up' but as time goes on <I question>: I don't necessarily know what caused them to act the way they did. From that respect I can't hold this forever but if I have to remove <the person> from my life I have to. If I had forgiven, would I call my \_(relative)\_\_\_<make contact>?

Pg. 16: There may be instances that I truly, truly haven't forgiven because if I had, would I have these feelings today? I don't know.

Pg. 16: People say: I forgive you, but I don't forget. Has forgiveness happened?

Pg. 22: it's not forgetting but I think it's looking back and denying or releasing people, events, etc. have power over you.

### **PERSPECTIVES ABOUT FORGIVENESS:**

Pg. 13: <there is a> difference between churchy forgiveness and true forgiveness with <which includes> processing feelings. More organic.

Pg. 26: In the past I used to blame myself for everything. I would assume I was in the wrong. A lot originated from Catholicism. ...Pg. 28 <I was> taught I was born in hell. I had learned when we went to God <church>, it was <a feeling of> "I'm so sorry". The Catholic forgiveness is all tied to sin. <I was> brought up with the belief I was born flawed.

Pg. 23: I just don't know that I'd explain it related to 'personal relationship with God' rather principle / Infinite. In this way <forgiveness> has felt a release or clearing.

Pg 6: God doesn't forgive you because God doesn't hold anything against you

Pg. 24: ...deeply personal, can (be) defined by so many choices and paths

Pg. 24: The hardest is self forgiveness, and forgiveness of family members.

Pg 8: I can't be waiting for the other person to acknowledge how they harmed me. My willingness to forgive is not dependent upon the other person.

Pg. 16: Time heals and you do forget

Pg. 22: it's not forgetting but I think it's looking back and denying or releasing people, events, etc. that have power over you.

Pg 9: Nothing is gained by harboring anger. Forgiveness is liberating when you recognize what we do that harms others is really a sad failing attempt to ease our pain. We can look at each other with compassion rather than anger. Where there is compassion it is easier to forgive. More time harboring anger, longer to forgive. With compassion forgiveness is faster.

Pg. 21: You don't meet anger with anger or it compounds. You absorb. You don't want to behave in a way that damages the relationship.

Pg. 29: Forgiveness starts with you. With introspection about anything you've contributed to the situation.

Pg. 25: Forgiveness is for your own self—benefits you and may not benefit anyone else.

Pg. 33: compassion with oneself

Pg. 27: I'm learning more and more, thinking more about the divine blueprint: shit shows up because there is something to be resolved; most of the time primarily forgiving myself.

Pg. 20: forgiveness has influence in the future

### **FORGIVENESS AS PROCESS, NOT A ONE TIME ACTION:**

Pg. 5: Even though I've forgiven sometimes things just show up. Forgiveness is an ongoing process—I ask: “why haven't I overcome? Is that something I still need to forgive?”

Pg 7: process is seeing it (unforgiveness)—then let it go? How?

Pg 11: I don't think it is an easy thing or a quick thing to do. It is a process.

Pg. 11:(I) can forgive to soon—before processing feelings

Pg. 15: takes time for me—I do eventually.

Pg. 22: It's a work in progress

Pg. 19: like school—practice over and over, like mastery

### **FORGIVENESS, MORE THAN WORDS:**

Pg. 3 the apologies are often not a resolution—surface level—rote with language

Pg 4: words didn't make a difference

Pg. 21: not about words, it's about energy.

PG. 6: to say I forgive is to say I blame you

### **CHILDHOOD INFLUENCES:**

Pg. 34: When we're young we embody feelings and thoughts, directives and instructions from adults. Given incorrect ideas can be concretized. Forgiveness would come when being able to break through the concrete. Maybe concrete is not the word. Maybe a less rigid word? As an adult we can forgive ourselves for having narrow ways of looking at things. Pg. 35: concretized might be hard-wired.

Pg. 12: If you're blaming yourself for something in childhood, it becomes a conditioned pattern

### **DIFFICULTY FORGIVING:**

Pg. 8: I haven't always had the will or desire to forgive, so my prayer is sometimes "give me the will to forgive."

Pg. 34: it seems more difficult to acknowledge my own innocence but I think I'm improving—a work in progress.

Pg. 23: I would say don't make the process of forgiveness too hard on yourself. It can happen in an instant.

Pg. 23: If you feel guilty about not forgiving someone else, the least you can do is forgive yourself.

Pg. 15: it's not always easy

Pg. 15: it can be complicated though—if something is terrible, this might be more difficult. I feel I have forgiven the person that harmed my daughter—I hope that person has become a better person. I pray in my own way for that person.

Pg. 28: I want people to own up to their own stuff

### **UNFORGIVENESS:**

Pg. 4: <unforgiveness> is a process, a miscommunication of energy

Pg. 25: unforgiveness keeps your own self in 'jail'.

Pg 10: you can't forgive if you have a hardened heart

### **HEART IMPLICATIONS:**

Pg. 3: (I) need to remain open—(from) feeling of being closed or hardened when I don't forgive; open in heart, and mind—to the lesson, to other perspectives.

Pg 9: When no emotional hook—resentment is let go. Probably forgiven. No longer an obstacle on your path to experiencing joy. When the heart is unobstructed, there is joy, Nature of being is joy.

Pg. 27: you can give lip service but (forgiveness) needs to come from heart

Pg. 1 <I> remind self of what really matters, not what happened but where we are stuck, (and) get back to a place of love

## REFERENCES TO TRUE FORGIVENESS:

Pg. 12: true forgiveness is when it creates repair in the relationship.

Pg 12: true forgiveness: when you get real with self—get through the projections and conditioning and restraints, and get real.

Pg. 7: Forgiveness of self—realization of this is a step in direction. Stand in the light—God Fix me. We don't fix ourselves....recognize it and ask Help Me—say with deep willingness and humility—on knees—it's impossible for me. Deep feeling.

Pg. 9: We're all children of the one God and we all came with same needs, we all undergo the same challenges—some bigger than others / no measuring; all stretched

Pg. 22: it's not forgetting but I think it's looking back and denying or releasing people, events, etc. have power over you.

Pg. 21: just knowing that love is a part of you, is in me—we can all be that loving guidance / presence—just grow—we're all in this together

Pg. 21: my grandparents modeled love and wisdom, loving presence ALWAYS; my grandmother was my mother figure

## HOW TO GO ABOUT FORGIVENESS:

Pg. 1: letting go of the perceived wrong...look closely at perception...clear misperceptions...misinterpretations were the issue therefore nothing to forgive. Even if there was an intention to hurt...that won't matter any more because of the awareness that there was more than that going on.

Pg. 26: I first must take responsibility for myself instead of blaming someone else...what they have contributed...

Pg.1: remind self of what really matters, not what happened but where we are stuck, get back to place of love ...being honest about what and where holding on

Pg. 2: put space around—open up—looking at it from different point of view...requires patience, space, relaxation to get to the understanding of what was really underneath it

Pg. 17: those that have harmed us, when that memory comes up, learn not to give it energy

Pg. 24: I am trying to understand the other person

Pg. 6: I forgive myself for thinking world could hurt me

Pg. 7: I forgive myself by not doing the same behavior—try to limit my old behaviors.

Pg. 24: knowing your own self, truth, and weaknesses

Pg. 17: I'm always more forgiving of another, so I can imagine that if I was to forgive another, what would it be, and apply this to myself.

Pg. 31: No rehearsing. By rehearsing, I'm not loving, at that moment, I'm 'out of care'

Pg. 31: on a practical side, not continuing to rehearse or rereviewing a situation that I reacted to (offended)

Pg. 22: If I find myself rehashing it is a sign of something to let go of. If it's a person, its more how I act to them. Conscious intention; thinking about this in advance a little bit.

### **FORGIVENESS AS RELEASE:**

Pg. 23: release as opposed to doing something more active.

Pg. 6: go deep within: no one has done anything to me; feel it coming up—you drop it; realize when you're doing it: drop it;

Pg. 15: I basically let it go, I try to see things from both perspectives.'

Pg. 31: I practice letting go, letting God. Some things are not mine to fix.

Pg 4: physically shake things off / negative energy

Pg. 27: Detachment—I think this ties into forgiveness. It's been my nature to intervene, even if my way is the better way, I'm trying to learn to wait till I've been asked.

Pg. 21: the internal compass of love—sometimes I have to distance and work with my energy, my self reflection; then I'm more aware of my energy being brought into the relationship when returning

Pg. 4: forgiveness doesn't have to be a spoken activity; can be written, spoken, sung, prayed...You can write a letter to someone that has passed.

### **FORGIVENESS AND SPIRITUAL PRACTICES:**

Pg. 3: coming from a place of silence, have to go to that place of silence...so much chatter, get past chatter, stop reliving it and hashing it out

Pg 5: I forgive myself through gratitude. Gratitude is a state of grace. So important to self compassion and self forgiveness.

Pg. 12: Dwelling in a state of love and acceptance, nothing to forgive—especially little things: rejection, being left out, things that can trigger a hurt feeling. Notice the difference between 'little things' and 'big things'

Pg. 28: In self forgiveness, I'M realizing and catching and being very mindful of words attached to "I AM"

Pg. 19: I go back to "we're all trying to do our best"--, even though this was not apparent when we were younger. We can be angry and resistant to this.

Once tapping into the spiritual, we can see the other person's true nature. When you're able to offer love, they can transcend: "I see the good in you as good."

We all aspire to be a better version of our self. When we focus on our inner guidance, love will find the wisdom. Tapping into our wiser self we can choose better, do better, and move on.

Pg. 9: Through Grace of God—letting God work in us and the other person. Be open to surprises and gifts God has for us especially in the area of Forgiveness.

Pg. 31: Sometimes asking for Wisdom. Wisdom to step back from situation, what is my part in it? What would be alternatives; how could my behavior be different so I don't get the same outcome?

Pg. 32: If I have trouble letting go, I see a universal energy force (like white water rafting). I can step into this field with imagination. Like the Golden Key (idea of turning away from the problem and turning to God); a pattern interrupt. In that energy field is Wisdom, it sends me into a whole different way of thinking and feeling. Maybe that's forgiveness?

Pg. 34: I immediately think of one of the spots we press on during breathwork: I forgive myself, I'm innocent, I forgive others..."

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