

## UU Peacemaking Congregational Study Action Program - Small Group Session Plan

### Session 2B - The Peace of Forgiveness

#### Chalice/Candle Lighting

#### Opening Words:

In October 2006 the Amish in Pennsylvania made national news when they promptly forgave the gunman who killed five Amish girls and wounded five more before killing himself.

I question "how the world is made a better place by assuring someone who would do terrible things to others that he will be forgiven afterward." - Jeff Jacoby, *Undeserved Forgiveness*, the Boston Globe October 8, 2006

I believe the point is not to condone evil but rather to avoid being consumed by the hatred and lust for vengeance that evil inspires. This is not some softheaded mumbo jumbo. It's a cultural strategy for self-preservation and mental health. - Mark Davis in a letter to the Boston Globe

Forgive me not! Hate me and I shall know  
Some of Love's fire still burns in your breast!  
Forgiveness finds its home in hearts at rest,  
On dead volcanoes only lies the snow.  
--- Lilla Cabot Perry, *Forgive me Not*

We agree to practice confession and forgiveness.  
- UUA Board of Trustees' 1999 Covenant

Saying doesn't make it so. --- Popular maxim

#### Check-in/Sharing

**Discussion:** "Forgiveness ... is a kind of boundary. It means giving up all hope of having a better past. It means releasing oneself from the conflict and letting the other person go. It means surrendering one's false expectations for how the other person ought to have behaved, releasing the other person to his or her own fate, and taking responsibility for clarifying the boundaries in one's own life. Forgiveness is always a choice." - Kenneth Cloke and Joan Goldsmith, *Resolving Personal and Organizational Conflict: Stories of transformation and forgiveness* p 172

How/where do you, personally, "practice" confession and forgiveness in your life?

Reflect on time when you felt wronged, violated, or seriously disrespected (or on a time when you hurt another person):

- How did it feel at the time you were wronged (or hurt the other person)?
- What did you do to try to understand the wrong? How long did it take?
- Were you able to forgive the perpetrator (or yourself) --- to make peace? Why/why not?
- What does forgiveness mean to you?

#### Select the topic and location for the next meeting

#### Check-out / Likes and Wishes

#### Closing Words:

Forgive us that we forgive ourselves so easily and others so hardly;  
Forgive us that we expect perfection from those to whom we show none;  
Forgive us for repelling people by the way we set a good example;  
Forgive us the folly of trying to improve a friend;  
Forbid that we should use our little idea of goodness as a spear to wound those who are different;  
Forbid that we should feel superior to others when we are only more shielded;  
And may we encourage the secret struggle of every person.  
--- Vivian Pomeroy, #477 in *Singing The Living Tradition*

Prepared by Barbara L. Bates of the Peacemaking CSAI Core Team, February 2007