
Freedom in Forgiveness

Setting Chairs in a circle. Small round table in the center of the circle with materials on the table to construct a paper chain (*symbol of the weight of unforgiveness*). Materials will include paper strips to form chain links and glue or tape. Soft music may encourage quiet as people arrive.

Arrival As each participant arrives, ask each person to form a link in the paper chain before being seated.



Call to Prayer

Leader Come to me, you who are tired,
you who are burdened, come.

*All We come with our hopes, and our fears;
We come as we are.*

Leader I have loved you with an everlasting love,
From your mother's womb,
I have taken delight in you.

*All We come in joy and in need;
We come as we are.*

Leader Today is the acceptable time,
Now is the hour of salvation.
All who are burdened with unforgiveness, come.

*All Now is the hour of salvation.
We come as we are.*

More Than Words, Prayer and Ritual for Inclusive Communities
by Janet Schaffran, CDP, and Pat Kosak, CSJ.

Good and gracious God,
who are we that you have loved us so well?
When we find our own selves
so often difficult to trust,
how is it that you have given us
this world of yours,
each other,
and a future that is in our hands?
We have need of your compassion,
your power and wisdom,
Our own has once again proven inadequate
in the face of so much need.
Be strong in us. Purify our intentions.
Deepen our commitment.
Be for us all that we need. Be God for us.
We await your saving presence.

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Let us listen to God's way of forgiveness.

Reading: Luke 15:11-24

Reflection

In his book, *Bound to Forgive*, Marty Jenco, OSM, states, "In prayer I go to God asking forgiveness from my sins, and knowing I need to forgive others. If I do not forgive, I cannot be at peace."

Let us reflect on areas and situations in the world where forgiveness is needed to bring peace.

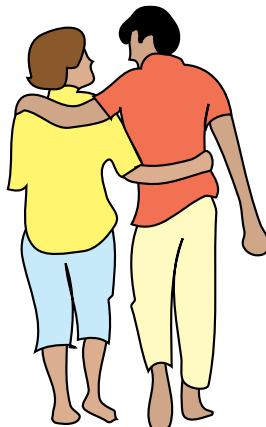
Allow for some quiet time.

*Then invite the naming of places/situations where
forgiveness is needed to bring about peace.*

Response *Loving God,
bring forgiveness and peace to our world.*

Today we live in a world of interconnectedness; a world where we experience the results of hatred and unforgiveness in a global community; a world that cries out for the healing, peace, and freedom that true forgiveness can bring. We have come together to reflect on this crucial need for forgiveness in our world, in our local communities, in our churches, and in our own individual lives. We have come together today to experience forgiveness that will heal our lives and send the seed of healing to our entire universe.

Let us pray for the strength we need (*together*):



Our churches, too, need the gift of forgiveness. Let us recall where this healing is needed.



*After some quiet time,
allow for naming
the areas where
forgiveness is needed.*

Response Loving God,
bring forgiveness and
peace to our churches.

Our local communities
share this need to forgive
in order for peace to
be present. Let us call
to mind where healing
through forgiveness is
needed.

Allow for quiet and sharing.

Response Loving God,
bring forgiveness and peace to our communities.

Within our own lives there is brokenness and barriers
to forgiveness. Let us look into our own hearts where
forgiveness and peace are needed.

Allow for reflection and sharing.

Response Loving God,
bring forgiveness and peace to our hearts.

Leader There are people who have deeply lived the
experience of forgiveness and the freedom it brings.
Let us listen to the experience of Marty Jenco, OSM,
a Beirut hostage.

Reading

“Bound to Forgive” — a *Hill Connections*
“Aha” Moment

Leader To say that each of us needs reconciliation
is to say that each of us is human—that each of us
stumbles, forgets, offends, and is thoughtless. It is
also to say that each of us needs the reassurance that
those we live with and work with understand our
failures and forgive us.

As we experience this acceptance, we forgive ourselves
also, and know unfailingly that God, too, understands

our humanness and embraces us in forgiveness.

Marie LeClerc Laux, SSND, “Woman Song II.”

You are now invited to come forward acknowledging
within your heart the forgiveness you give to break the
link of bondage symbolized in the chain we have built.
Break and take a link from the chain as a symbol of
the freedom and peace that forgiveness brings to you
and to the world.

*A song of peace or forgiveness
may be played or sung during this time.*

Closing Prayer

Side One Lift up your hearts.

God has loved you with a tenderness beyond words.
Our God has remembered your faithfulness
and put aside your sin.

Side Two Lift up your hearts.

God has called you, believing in your goodness.
God has given you a new season of hope
and cast aside despair.

Side One Lift up your hearts.

For God’s Word will not return empty or void.
It will accomplish the task for which it was sent.

Side Two Lift up your hearts.

For God’s word is alive within us
and we are unable to be silent.

We will sing the truth with our every breath.

*All We lift up our hearts to our God;
For we have known full well God’s forgiveness,
justice and mercy.*

What return can we make for all God’s goodness?

We lift up our hearts

*And reach out our hands in
forgiveness, peace, and love.*

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Closing Ritual

Invite each one to turn to the person
to the right and give the broken chain
link with a greeting of forgiveness
and peace.



Acknowledgments

“Freedom in Forgiveness” ritual: [Marguerite Samz, OSM](#); from [Hill Connections](http://hillconnections.org) (<http://hillconnections.org>),
a web site linking [Contemplation](#) and [Social Justice](#).