He (she) who is devoid of the power to forgive,

is devoid of the power to love.

-- Martin Luther King, Jr.
Without forgiveness, there really is no future.

-- Bishop Desmond Tutu

For me, forgiveness and compassion

are always linked:

How do we hold people

accountable

for wrongdoing

and yet

at the same time

remain

in touch

with their humanity

enough

to believe

in their capacity

to be

transformed?

-- bell hooks
Course Description: In this semester-long, on-line, three-unit class we will meet people from all over the world, from a variety of religious and cultural traditions, who have practiced forgiveness as a means of healing, peace and liberation. Through readings, films, and spiritual practice exercises we will develop interpersonal and pastoral skills in forgiveness. We will work on strengthening our "forgiveness muscles" and support others in doing so as well. We will also explore “the other side of forgiveness”: how we individually and collectively might apologize, repent and atone after wrongdoing. This class will be experiential, drawing on personal narratives, neuroscience, psychology, practical theology and the wisdom and practices of Judaism, Christianity, Islam and Buddhism.

Course Requirements:

• Students are expected to participate on-line in class weekly.

• They will need to read or watch the texts related to that week's theme.

• They will discuss the texts through on-line posts and/or off-line conversations with classmates via skype, phone or in person.

• They will be asked to do one practice exercise and comment on a classmate's practice post each week.

• Students will be asked by the fifth week to select a focus for their personal forgiveness practice and then work on it each week thereafter.

• Students will be expected to read 3 of the recommended books and/or watch 6 of the recommended films related to the class to deepen their understanding and practice of forgiveness. Other books, films and/or activities (e.g., workshops, research, preparing a sermon or worship service, working with a therapist or spiritual director, etc.) may be substituted for this in-depth learning requirement with the instructor’s prior approval.

• Finally, students will be asked to contribute 2-3 pieces of their work to the class' fall anthology.
**Course Objectives:** By the end of Fall semester, students will be able to: (1) demonstrate a nuanced understanding of the power, complexity and limitations of forgiveness; (2) explain how grievance stories are created and how they can be dismantled; (3) identify similarities and differences in the ways various religious traditions approach forgiveness, repentance and atonement; (4) reflect on their practice and struggles with forgiveness and repentance; (5) listen and support others in their journeys toward forgiveness; and (6) discuss specific examples of forgiveness and reconciliation in the wake of large-scale violence.

**Course Instructor:** The class will be taught by Rev. Christine Fry, an ordained Unitarian Universalist minister. Chris has been teaching at Starr King for the Ministry for over ten years offering classes on Forgiveness; Spiritual Practices; and Poetry, Illness & Pastoral Care. She lives in Davis, California with her husband, Isao Fujimoto, a retired UC Davis professor and long-time community activist. Their daughter - Esumi - was born during Chris' second year at Starr King School for the Ministry and is now living in New York City and working as a nurse.

**Office Hours:** Chris will be available to meet with students individually through email, phone, skype and, on occasion, in person. Please email Chris (revcfry@aol.com) ahead of time to schedule a meeting.
Fall 2015 Calendar

Week One: September 8 – 13, 2015

THE POWER OF FORGIVENESS

Query: What is – and is not – forgiveness?

Class Film (required): "The Power of Forgiveness" by Martin Doblmeier

Week Two: September 14 – 20, 2015

GRIEVANCE STORIES

Query: What is a grievance story? How can we tell a different story?

Suggested Book: Fred Luskin's *Forgive for Good*.

Suggested Films: "Les Miserables" by Bille August; "The Spit-Fire Grill" by Lee David Zlotoff.

Week Three: September 21 – 27, 2015

AMISH GRACE

Query: What can the Amish teach us about the practice of forgiveness?

Suggested Book: Donald Kraybill's *Amish Grace: How Forgiveness Transcended Tragedy*.

Suggested Film: "Amish Grace" by Gregg Champion.
Week Four: September 28 – October 4, 2015

GETTING READY TO FORGIVE . . . MAYBE

Query: Is forgiveness something we can learn? How do we begin?

Suggested Books: Fred Luskin's *Forgive for Good*; Stephen Cherry's *Healing Agony: Re-Imagining Forgiveness*


Week Five: October 5 – October 11, 2015

March 18 – AZIM'S BARDO

Query: How does our spiritual community support – or hinder - our journey toward forgiveness and restorative justice?


Suggested Films: *Breathing*; *The Interrupters*.

Week Six: October 12 – 18, 2015

FAMILY FEUDS & BETRAYALS

Query: How do we forgive - or not - the ones closest to us?

Suggested Books: Sue Thompson's *The Prodigal Brother: Making Peace with Your Parents, Your Past and the Wayward One in Your Family*; Louise De Salvo's *Crazy in the Kitchen: Food, Feuds and*
Forgiveness in an Italian American Family (memoir); Janis Abrahms Spring's After the Affair: Healing the Pain & Rebuilding Trust When a Partner Has Been Unfaithful.

**Suggested Films:** "Around the Bend" with Michael Caine; "A Thousand Acres" with Michelle Pfeiffer; "Redwoods" by David Lewis; "The Heart of Me" by Thaddeus O'Sullivan.

Week Seven: October 19 – 25, 2015

**TO REPENT AND APOLOGIZE**

**Query:** What is repentance? How do we apologize for wrong-doing?

**Suggested Books:** Louis Newman's Repentance: The Meaning and Practice of Teshuvah; Gary Chapman and Jennifer Thomas' The Five Languages of Apology;

**Suggested Films:** "The Kite Runner" with Khalid Abdalla; "The Widow of St. Pierre" by Patrice Leconte;

Week Eight: October 26 – November 1, 2015

**READING WEEK**

Week Nine: November 2 – 8, 2015

**WHEN A CHILD IS HURT**

**Query:** Are some people, some acts, unforgivable? When and how can forgiveness lead to more harm?

**Suggested Books:** Nancy Richards' Heal & Forgive: Forgiveness in the Face of Abuse; Marie Fortune and Joretta Marshall's Forgiveness &
Abuse: Jewish and Christian Reflections; Martin Moran's The Tricky Part: A Boy's Story of Sexual Trespass, A Man's Journey to Forgiveness:

Suggested Films: "Antwone Fisher" with Denzel Washington (drama); "Boys & Men Healing from Child Sexual Abuse" by Big Voice Pictures (documentary); "Priest" by Antonia Bird; "Deliver Us From Evil" by Amy Berg.

Week Ten: November 9 – 15, 2015

RONALD COTTON & THE INNOCENCE PROJECT

Query: How do we forgive when we have been unfairly accused and hurt?


Suggested Films: 60 Minutes Eyewitness Interview of Jennifer Thompson-Cannino (March 8, 2009, C); After Innocence (2005, NF-S) with Ronald Cotton et. al.

Week Eleven: November 16 – 22, 2015

THE SUNFLOWER

Query: What would you have done if asked to forgive a Nazi soldier? In the wake of horrific wrong-doing, must we never forgive?


Suggested Films: I have Never Forgotten You: The Life & Legacy of Simon Wiesenthal directed by Richard Trank; God on Trial directed by
Andy DeEmmony. *Forgiving Dr. Mengele: The Eva Kors Story* (directed by Cheri Pugh).

Week Twelve: November 30 – December 6, 2015

**RECONCILIATION**

**Query:** How - or do we - reconcile with those who have hurt us? Can we forgive without reconciling? Reconcile without forgiving?

**Suggested Films:** "Reconciliation" with Eric Nenninger and Jack Maxwell; "A Straight Story" by David Lynch;

**Suggested Book:** Laura Davis' *I Thought We'd Never Speak Again: The Road from Estrangement to Reconciliation*;

Week Thirteen: December 7 – 13, 2015

**FORGIVENESS & RECONCILIATION IN RWANDA**

**Query:** What can Rwandans teach us about the possibilities for forgiveness and reconciliation after genocide?


**Suggested Films:** *As We Forgive* directed by Laura Waters Hinson; *Diary of Immaculee* directed by Peter LeDonne.

Week Fourteen: December 14 – 20, 2015

**CLOSING REFLECTIONS**
Query: What have we learned so far?