

**Parting  
Thoughts**

-- from Tears of the Giraffe by Alexander McCall Smith.

Everybody knew about Mr. Mandela and how he had forgiven those who had imprisoned him. They had taken away years and years of his life simply because he wanted justice ... But at last, when he had walked out of the prison on that breathless, luminous day, he had said nothing about revenge or even retribution. He had said that there were more important things to do than to complain about the past, and in time he had shown that he meant this by hundreds of acts of kindness towards those who had treated him so badly. That was the real African way, the tradition that was closest to the heart of Africa. We are all children of Africa, and none of us is better or more important than the other. This is what Africa could say to the world: *it could remind it what it is to be human.*



**SMALL GROUP MINISTRY**

FIRST UNITARIAN CHURCH OF  
SAN JOSE

## **The Path of Forgiveness**

“When we forgive, we come as close as any human being can to the essentially divine act of creation.”

-- Lewis Smedes

“The great gifts the Jewish people have given me, through the Days of Awe, Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur, is the reminder that each year, even each new day, brings with it the hope for transformation, for possibility, for forgiveness and acceptance. And that when we bring those qualities of acceptance and forgiveness to our religious community, all of us grow and become better people.”

-- Rev. Barbara Wells, Paint Branch UU Church

**Preliminaries** Assign chalice lighter.

**Opening / Chalice Lighting**  
 - Hymnal #123, "Spirit of Life"  
 Spirit of Life, come unto me.  
 Sing in my heart all the stirrings of compassion.  
 Blow in the wind, rise in the sea;  
 Move in the hand, giving life the shape of justice.  
 Roots hold me close, wings set me free;  
 Spirit of Life, come to me, come to me.

**Check-in** Share the high and low point of your life this past week.

**Responsive Reading**  
 - Hymnal #637,  
 A Litany of Atonement,  
 Robert Eller-Isaacs  
*Each member takes a turn saying the leading line in regular type, while others say the response in bold.*

For remaining silent when a single voice would have made a difference  
**We forgive ourselves and each other; we begin again in love.**

For each time that our fears have made us rigid and inaccessible  
**We forgive ourselves and each other; we begin again in love.**

For each time that we have struck out in anger without just cause  
**We forgive ourselves and each other; we begin again in love.**

For each time that our greed had blinded us to the needs of others  
**We forgive ourselves and each other; we begin again in love.**

For the selfishness which sets us apart and alone  
**We forgive ourselves and each other; we begin again in love.**

For falling short of the admonitions of the spirit  
**We forgive ourselves and each other; we begin again in love.**

For losing sight of our unity  
**We forgive ourselves and each other; we begin again in love.**

For those and for so many acts both evident and subtle which have fueled the illusion of separateness  
**We forgive ourselves and each other; we begin again in love.**

**Silence**

**Sharing / Deep Listening** *Please share your personal reflections on the topic of forgiveness.*

**Discussion** This is a time to supportively respond to something another person said or to relate additional thoughts that may have occurred as others shared.

**Singing**  
 -- Hymnal #205,  
 Amazing Grace  
 Amazing grace! How sweet the sound  
 That saved a soul like me!  
 I once was lost but now am found,  
 Was blind but now I see.

'Twas grace that taught by heart to fear,  
 And grace my fears relieved;  
 How precious did that grace appear  
 The hour I first believed.

Through many dangers, toils, and snares,  
 I have already come;  
 'Tis grace that brought me safe thus far,  
 And grace will lead me home.

**Closing / Reading Round-the-Circle**  
 -- adapted from  
 worship materials  
 of Temple Israel,  
 Stockton,  
 California

Quiet moments of reflection open my soul.  
 Blessed with another week of life, I give thanks to the source of life.  
 For all the good I have known during these days that have passed, I am very grateful.  
 I know that I have not always responded with my best effort, but often I did earnestly try.  
 I have tried to give my family and friends love and devotion, and I hope that I grow more loving as the years pass.  
 Even as I regret my weaknesses, I rejoice in my accomplishments. Let these achievements lead to many others.  
 May I be blessed each week with the sense of having grown in goodness and compassion.

