**Forgiveness**

**The Practice of Forgiveness**

1. **Prepare -** Set aside a time and a place to work through this forgiveness process. Prayerfully imagine yourself entering God’s presence and being surrounded by God’s love and God’s presence. If you are engaging this process with something particular that you want to forgive name this before God and name your desire to forgive this person and to be release both your self and this person from what happened so that both of you can be healed. If you are not brining a specific incident, sit in God’s presence ask God to reveal to you a person or incident that you need to forgive. Do not be surprise if it is your self. Express to God your desire to forgive, to make a change and be released so that you can find healing.

3. **Express** your experience of being in a relationship with that person. Imagine sitting across from the person that you need to forgive. Some people will even place a picture or something else that represents that person. Express to that person what has happened and how it has effected you. Share your experience of what it was like for you to be in a relationship with this person. Express all of you feeling, as they are within you. . If you can do this out loud, all the better. If you need to physically express you anger or hurt feel free to do this - just ensure that you can do this safely and not destroy something that you will regret latter. Let it all out. Express your feelings just as they are.

4. **Release:** Tell that person (or yourself) that you forgive them. Release you expectation of that person one by one. Release how you had hoped they would act, be, treat you, love you etc. Allow them to be just as they are.

 **5. Reciprocate:** If appropriate, allow that person that you imagine sitting across from you to express what it has been like for them to be in relationship with you or how this incident has effected them. Ask that person to forgive you. Allow your self to hear them expressing their forgiveness of you. Allow yourself to go back and forth between **Release** and **Reciprocate** until you feel that everything that needs to be expressed and forgiven has been. Then Imagine that person now leaving the room.

6. **Restore** your boundaries. When someone has hurt deeply one of our personal boundaries has usually been violated. Imagine that boundary being restored. Set out specifically for you self how you will in the future maintain a healthy boundary with that person.

7. **Open** your self to God. Ask God to creatively meet your needs and to bring wholeness and healing to your life. Release that person into God’s love and pray that God may also bring healing and wholeness to the other person.

8. **See** the goodness in that other person or situation.

9. **Res**t, surrounded by God’s love, open to how that love may now unfold in your life.

10. **Continue** – begin to integrate this forgiveness into your life, begin to live in a new way. If necessary return to this process of forgiveness as often as your own journey of healing requires.

**A Note on Reconciliation** – Reconciliation is its own process. It is about restoring relationship that have been broken. Sometimes we are called to this process of reconciliation, at other times we must entrust this process to Christ in whom all things will be reconciled. No one can demand reconciliation of someone else. When there has been a profound hurt, to do so is itself an act of violence. I have never known God to demand reconciliation, but rather God calls, heals and leads people to a place where they can begin the work of reconciliation. When people are ready, and called to it, reconciliation is the path to life. Reconciliation, involves forgiveness. It involves naming the truths of what has happened and release of those involved. It also involves concrete acts of healing the broken, when possible righting wrongs, and changing the systems that caused the original brokenness. This involves hard work and often “cold anger” - This is what has often, I believe incorrectly been translated as meekness. Instead it is when we are not apathetic or passive, nor controlled by our anger, but rather recognize when wrong has been done, and then are fueled by passion, guided by wisdom, and filled by a greater love. Perhaps a better name for this is loving anger. Reconciliation is when, we act concretely to heal relationships, systems and cultures that are broken.