

4. Presenters...

This space is for local priests, ministers and pastors to put their information about those within their denomination, (including themselves,) who are available to provide pastoral counsel on the subject and process of forgiveness.

Parish resources can be listed here along with wider denominational resources for pastoral and spiritual counseling.

5. Parish Resources...

Name: telephone, email

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Please contact Name or name for group or individual meeting times

A special thanks to the Victim Pastoral Care Committee of the Church Council on Justice and Corrections, for contributing to this pamphlet.

Fr. Bob Poole and Peter Jennings (members of this committee) are available to help with discussions on forgiveness as a process to achieving spiritual healing and freedom.

Please call CCJC for further contact information at (613) 563 1688, Ext. 105

Healing Through Forgiveness...

Be kind to one another, tender hearted, forgiving each other, just as God in Christ has forgiven you. Eph 4:32



It starts with a process...

The Church Council On Justice and Corrections

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Ideally, the person who invests in the forgiveness process is someone who is desperate to change their life, has a willingness to face the awful things that happened and is ready to release forgiveness to the attacker.

At the same time the person must be able to acknowledge how holding on to the grudge, maintains an emotional prison in oneself. In those cases the process of healing can move forward relatively smoothly and straightforwardly, which is not always the case.

It begins with a deep desire to be set free, and a willingness to do all that is necessary to achieve this.



3. Forgiving Oneself...

The third important aspect of the healing process is the willingness to recognize the trap of our negative emotions in continuing the effects of the original offence.

By holding onto resentment, bitterness, anger and hatred, we ourselves compound our experience of harm.



The forgiving process can be described as a willingness to release and go beyond those negative mindsets and relinquish the mental strongholds of hatred, anger and bitterness towards one's assailant.

Forgiveness and letting go are the twin prongs of the healing process, and together open up the heart to receive the healing power of God through our Creator's Spirit.

Who is this booklet for?

This booklet is for those individuals...

- ✧ Whose spirits are filled with anger, resentment, fear or vengeance as they live through the trauma of crime or violence in their lives.
- ✧ Who are struggling to find spiritual peace at the centre of their lives.
- ✧ Who wish to leave victimization behind and claim the freedom of the spirit that healing through forgiveness can bring.



1. First it is a process...



It takes time to achieve fully the benefits of setting oneself free by forgiveness.

A trust relationship must develop between the one being pastored and the pastor. Some time needs to

be spent acknowledging the harm done, granting the victim the space to share his/her pain in a safe setting without judgement. Essentially it is taking the time to listen; victims need to be heard.

Some heartfelt feedback is appropriate as by sincerely acknowledging the pain. The victim must know (s)he is in fact being heard, all the while the separation barrier slowly breaks down, further deepening the trust.

By continuously deciding to release forgiveness each time the memory of the offence arises, even if it is done while gritting one's teeth, the healing process is allowed to advance.

In each hurtful memory, a declaration of forgiveness is made between pastoral care giver hearing the hurts and person seeking to forgive another.



Eventually, the heart “catches up” with the will, and one usually finds that it is easier to forgive “from the heart” more and more. It is as we say moving from the head to the heart.

It is usually impossible for a person to begin the process of forgiving by a truly heart-felt act of pardoning the offender. We are not immediately inclined to pardon and it is not something that someone truly wants to do or feels like doing.

***Forgiveness
is firstly
an act of
the will,
not of the
emotions.***



If one sees the destructive effects on oneself of not releasing forgiveness to one's offender, then it is possible to make a decision and declare "I choose to forgive so-and-so " or "I am willing to be willing " to forgive them, or even , "I want to try to forgive."

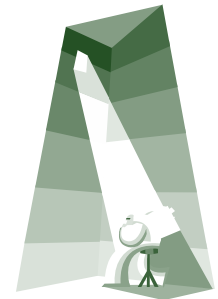
2. **Introducing Forgiveness into the conversation...**

After establishing the trust relationship, the second part of the journey begins. Some time must be spent explaining the importance of forgiveness in the healing process of the victim.

Friends and family of the victim, to say nothing of the victim himself/herself, often lose sight of the fact that by not forgiving one's offender, the outrage of their original assault will continue.

Clinging to "not forgiving" allows the continuance of strong, destructive emotions of hatred, rage, bitterness, resentment, vengefulness and so on, to boil inside.

Eventually such reactions, if not dealt with in a healthy way, become mental and emotional strongholds, that imprison one in a self-imposed jail of negativity.





Often these emotions lead to self-destructive behaviours and psychological distress such as evidenced by chronic anxiety syndrome, depression, fear and suspicion-driven neurotic actions.

Further, shame-based and self-rejecting, self-condemning behaviours like alcohol and drug addiction, and even thoughts of suicide and wanting to end it all, can overshadow hope.

Because the pain of trauma can be held in the body, physical ailments can also be exacerbated by the mental poison eating away at the inside of one's body.

Many victims suffer strained relationships with their families, friends and co-workers due to the hold that bitterness and anger has on their outlook.

The refusal to begin or even contemplate forgiveness continues to give the original crime a negative energy and power long after any physical harm has healed.

By not forgiving, one permits the offender to have complete control over one's state of mind including one's emotional, spiritual and physical life. The poison kills the will to live.

But that said, it is important to understand and explain to the victim that forgiveness does not mean forgetting what happened, or pretending it doesn't matter, or it really wasn't so bad. It is not "letting the person who did the harm off".

One moves from being a victim to being a free human being again. It is done for one's own well being and not out of altruism. It frees the victim up to be the person they are called to be.

It is deciding to no longer continue as a victim of the offender.

