



Unburdened, a Journey Toward Forgiveness

October 11-November 22

As we have had ongoing conversations about our proposed safe church policy, one of the questions that has been raised is, “what is the role of forgiveness?” Are some harms so egregious that forgiveness is impossible? Who decides when forgiveness is appropriate? What are the roles of justice and mercy? Throughout this series we will explore some of those ideas as we look at Biblical stories of brokenness, repentance, restoration and forgiveness.

We will be drawing from the book, “Unburdened, A Journey Toward Forgiveness” by Carol Penner. While this devotional is written for the 7 weeks of Lent, it fits well with the seven weeks of our series. The worship committee was drawn to the idea that forgiveness is a journey, rather than being a one time event. Penner writes, “Forgiveness is wild and elusive, it can take our whole lives to forgive those who harmed us. Sometimes we may never manage it. And when we have caused harm, we may deeply and earnestly desire forgiveness from others, but we may not receive it. We cannot control whether people forgive us. Forgiveness is both a gift from God and it’s the hardest work we have to do.”

Some of us can likely carry stories of pain around relationships where forgiveness was coerced rather than freely given. Our safe church policy states that: Grace and mercy are extended in the context of repentance, accountability, and justice. Forgiveness belongs to the victim and is theirs alone to offer in their own time. The congregation shall not presume or pressure on that process. Forgiveness is a journey that follows justice, truth telling, boundary setting and accountability. This is a process that serves both the person that has been harmed and those who has caused harm. Our hope in this series is to explore this complicated topic with openness, empathy and curiosity, encouraging “small steps toward the freedom found in forgiveness.”

About October 25: On October 25th we will focus our worship service on the theme Becoming Unburdened, Pursuing Freedom. This will be a service that centers the stories of survivors in our congregation. Members of Assembly who are survivors of abuse have written about their experience and reflected on the long journey of healing and repair in preparation for this service. Parts of their stories will be read by other members of the congregation. There will not be explicit details of abuse, but abuse and harm will be named. We encourage you to talk with your children and youth ahead of time about this service. Moriah will be sending out an email to parents with suggestions on how to talk to your kids.

During second hour we'll have time for sermon response and discussion in ABC groups (this time the groups will be assigned based on the first letter of your middle name).

	Theme & text	Preacher	Extras	Second Hour
10/11	<i>Seeking Repentance</i> Nehemiah 9: 1-17	Jim Stump	Retreat at Camp Friedenswald Worship at 10am	No second Hour
10/18	<i>Naming Sin</i> Genesis 4:8-16, Cain and Abel Luke 11: 37-54	Anna Yoder Schlabach		ABC GROUPS (by middle names)
10/25	<i>Becoming Unburdened, Pursuing Freedom</i> Genesis 33:1-20, Jacob and Esau	Anonymous stories of survivors		ABC GROUPS
11/1	<i>Responding to Brokenness</i> Matthew 18: 15-22 If someone wrongs you	Rachel Miller Jacobs	All Saints Remembrance	ABC GROUPS Parent meeting lunch after
11/8	<i>Making a Way for Mercy</i> Jonah 1:1-17	Karl Shelly	Commission for those going to COP31	ABC GROUPS
11/15	<i>Building Forgiveness</i> Genesis 45:1-15 Joseph and his brothers	Paul Keim	Communion	ABC GROUPS
11/22	<i>Treading Holy Ground</i> Luke 23: 18-34 Father, Forgive them	Moriah Hurst		ABC GROUPS