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From the Desk of Rev. Chuck

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Dear Friends,

As the old saying goes, *April showers bring May flowers*. Spring is upon us and bursting out all of the place. As I looked out upon nature an idea popped into my head: *“Why can’t we humans be as forgiving as nature is to all that is around her? Nature just is, responding to life all around her as it should be, as it’s meant to be. Oh, yea! Feelings, human feelings, they do tend to get in the way. But, they say, plants and animals do feel and react to stimuli, but not the way we humans do.*

We’re all heard the adage from Alexander Pope that, *“To err is human, to forgive is divine.”* The question that comes to mind then is, *“How many of us have been divine in our actions toward others?”*

The writer of Matthew said that Jesus put it this way, *“So if you are offering your gift at the altar, and there remember that your brother has something against you, leave your gift there before the altar and go; first be reconciled to your brother, and then come and offer your gift,”* (Matthew 5:23-24).

We can’t go to God in prayer and offer our gift, such as a prayer of forgiveness for ourselves for something we may have done, and expect it to be granted if we have ill will in our hearts toward another. What we truly want for ourselves we must be willing to want it for others.

And later on in Matthew, Jesus again addresses the issue of forgiveness with Peter, *“Then Peter came up and said to him, ‘Lord, how often shall my brother sin against me, and I forgive him? As many as seven times?’ ‘Jesus said to him, ‘I do not say to you seven times, but seventy times seven.’”*(Matthew 18:21).

Jesus was a master at understanding the human condition and understood that our ego can get in the way of being able to always forgive. This statement to Peter shows that forgiveness is not a

one time thing, put an action we need to practice because it’s a process of allowing forgiveness to be part of our daily living.

While in ministerial school at Unity I came across a quote that has severed me well in the process of forgiving others: *“Forgiveness does not always lead to a healed relationship. Some people are not capable of showing love and forgiveness, so it would be wise to let them go along with any resentment or anger you are holding. Just wish them well and take care of yourself. For there is no love without forgiveness, and there is no forgiveness without love.”*

There’s an old legend that is told of a nun who claimed that she conversed with Jesus. When the bishop heard of this he called for the nun and asked her, *“Sister, do you talk to Jesus often?”* The nun answered, *“Yes, I do.”* *“Well then, sister, when you talk to him again ask him this question: ‘What was the bishops’ great sin before he became bishop?’”* He knew that only God and his confessor would know.

About three months later, the nun made an appointment to see the bishop. When she came in, he said, *“Did you talk to Jesus again?”* *“Yes,”* she replied. *“Did you ask him the question about my sin?”* *“Yes, I did.”* *“And what did he say?”* She smiled and answered, *“Jesus said, ‘God doesn’t remember anymore.’”*

Charles Fillmore, co-founder of Unity, once wrote: *“Forgiveness is ‘for giving,’* When I read that I thought, we must be willing to give that which we ourselves desire. After all, we all fall short of living a divine spiritual life, we all stumble along the way. We all desire love, order, harmony and peace in our lives and when we give the gift of forgiveness all these are possible. As the old farmer once said, *“Fertilize the tree of forgiveness with love and you’ll reap a bountiful harvest for all to share.”*