MINISTRY OF RECONCILIATION

Be kind and compassionate to one another, forgiving each other, just as in Christ God forgave you. (Ephesians 4:32)

The word "reconcile" (Greek root *kapar*, meaning *to change* or *exchange*) means *to bring together* or *heal what is broken* and encompasses our relationships with God and one another.

Healing can begin as we accept our part in the broken relationship, **ask for, and extend forgiveness. This does not mean reconciliation will happen;** sometimes, even if we are willing others are not.

Scripture is filled with incredible reconciliation stories, including:

- Jacob and Esau
- Joseph and his brothers
- David and Mephibosheth
- the prodigal son and father
- Onesimus and Philemon
- Paul and Barnabas
- Peter and Jesus

BROTHERS RECONCILE

Genesis 33:4 is a powerful moment of reconciliation between Esau and his brother Jacob. *But Esau ran to meet him and embraced him and fell on his neck and kissed him, and they wept.*

It is an unscripted, unforced, honest, and completely vulnerable moment between brothers who had been long estranged.

FATHER AND SON REUNITE

Another deeply touching reciliation story is between the prodigal son and his father in Luke 15:20: *But while [the son] was still a long way off, his father saw him and was filled with compassion for him; he ran to his son, threw his arms around him and kissed him.*

After the son took his inheritance and spent it all, he returned home, hoping only that his father would hire him as a servant. Yet as soon as the father saw his son, he gathered his robes and ran to embrace him. The father didn't hesitate, demand an apology, or rebuke his son. Instead, he threw him a feast!

SCRIPTURE TO MEDITATE ON

Choose one verse for each day of the week. Read the verse several times then prayerfully consider the Questions for Reflection below.

- Colossians 3:13
- Ephesians 4:31-32
- Matthew 5:24b
- James 5:16
- Romans 5:10
- 2 Corinthians 5:18-20
- Colossians 1:19-20

QUESTIONS FOR REFLECTION

- Is there a strained or estranged relationship in your life?
- Has someone hurt or wronged you?
- Have you hurt or wronged someone?
- Is there a wrong you need to forgive, even if you never receive an apology or are never able to reconcile the relationship?

In the face of conflict, we can be proud, stubborn, selfish, and impatient. It is far easier to judge than to love, to walk away than to forgive, to harbor a grudge than to surrender the situation to God.

Tim Keller wrote, *Forgiveness is a form of voluntary suffering. In forgiving, rather than retaliating, you make a choice to bear the cost.*

Forgiveness is one of the most difficult forms of love because it requires selfless sacrifice and surrender of the wound to God.

RECONCILIATION AND ONE-ANOTHERING

Reconciliation is a journey toward loving another as we love ourselves, a journey that will continue every day this side of eternity. It will require courage, patience, honesty, humility, compassion, communication, prayer, sacrifice, and forgiveness, as we learn to:

- love one another
- pray for one another
- serve one another
- be patient with one another
- be compassionate to one another
- forgive one another
- bear with one another
- be kind to one another
- be gracious to one another

It is faith that looks up at the creator God and knows him to be the God of love. And it is faith that looks out at the world with the longing to bring that love to bear in healing reconciliation, and hope. (N.T. Wright)