

**OSTS Lecture, Winter 2025, 1st Term
January 6th to February 3rd**

Course G *The Journey to Forgiveness (Zoom Class)*

Lecturer Reverend Carol Penner

Descriptor

Why can it be so hard to forgive someone who hurt you? What can we do if someone will not forgive us for the harm we've done? Using stories, we will explore the stages along the way that make forgiveness more likely to happen for individuals and communities. (48 words)

Outline

Week 1: Longing for Repair

People hurt us, and we hurt others; relationships need to be repaired. In this session we will explore woundedness, and the need for addressing harm done. Why is it so hard to say "sorry," and why is a "sorry" often not enough? We will explore the dynamics of the harm done by groups of people.

Week 2: Turning Around

What is the process of realizing we have done something wrong? Acknowledging the harm we've caused can sometimes take a very long time. What does repentance look like? What is the role of community in this process?

Week 3: Building Forgiveness

Forgiveness is sometimes mysterious and elusive in our lives; it can take decades. In this session we will explore the steps that can lead to forgiveness, both for the person who did the harm, and the person who was harmed. Building blocks include apologies, accountability, and restitution.

Week 4: Pursuing Freedom

When we have been badly hurt, it can feel like we are chained to those who hurt us, because we can't stop thinking about what's happened. In this session we explore the process of moving towards freedom. Why is safety so important? What is mercy, and how do we find it in ourselves?

Week 5: Holy Ground

When forgiveness happens, it needs to be treasured, and also protected. In this session we explore how forgiveness can be

transformative and life-changing. Sometimes forgiveness is a multi-generational project. How can spiritual communities be places where forgiveness flourishes?

Bio

Dr. Carol Penner is the Director of Theological Studies at Conrad Grebel University College in Waterloo, Ontario. She was a pastor for many years, and has been a freelance writer. Her research explores issues of abuse, accountability and forgiveness. Her most recent book is "Unburdened: A Lenten Journey Towards Forgiveness" (Herald Press, 2024).