



## The Ageing Experience

# Forgiveness and Reconciliation

**It seems to me that forgiving and being forgiven becomes a bigger experience as we become older.**

I mean that in two ways. Firstly, it's more important as we age and reflect on the meaning of our life that we can do the forgiving we need to, to begin the process of reconciliation of relationships.

Secondly, the understanding of the faith love needed for forgiveness becomes a wider, deeper thing. This might be simply because I'm a slow learner about the wideness of Christ's love - but, if so, I know there will be other 'slow learners' who share my experience.

I listened to a radio interview recently with animal

behaviourist Professor van de Waal. He was discussing the question: Do animals have feelings such as guilt or forgiveness? He concludes that they do forgive, using the example of chimpanzees with which he has done a lot of work. Chimpanzees get into conflict and fight, but later they will embrace and be friends again. He believes that to again become friends they must have an emotional turnaround, like forgiveness within, to enable them to show actions of friendship (i.e. to reconcile).

I'm not quite sure that means they forgive - is reconciliation the same thing as forgiveness? It may simply be that they recognize the benefit of living together in their society and so do the things that make that necessary to happen. Of course, that is still a big step up; it's not

unusual for humans, including those in Church settings, to speak of ongoing conflict within their family, such as a brother never being seen, for example.

Our faith tells us we need to do better than that. In the Lord's Prayer, we say "forgive us as we forgive others". Does this mean, though, that a victim of domestic violence is supposed to forgive and reconcile? That used to be the teaching of the Church, which meant the victim was setting themselves up for a life of victimhood.

Forgiveness is complex, but part of it, if not about freeing the other person, is about freeing the self - not to be burdened all one's life with a bitterness within.

If there is a requirement for repentance prior to forgiveness (as scripture sometimes suggests), how do we deal with those who seem unrepentant, or who have died?

In this case, I think the Christ-love within needs to be expansive to enable forgiveness, and perhaps this is where ageing comes to the

fore. The experience of deep human love sets us up to 'know', perhaps recognize, Christ's love; as human loves die, we can reach inwardly in prayer, in relationship, to Christ's love waiting for us. As we come to know that love, we find

forgiveness is more possible, and the ongoing relationship with a human one who has died changes in its nature also. True forgiveness is less about will-power and more about allowing the experience of deep loving, a wonderful reward of ageing.

Rev Jan Fogg



## CARING FOR OUR PEOPLE

# How are you doing?

Trudy Downes, Health and Safety Coordinator

**As part of our emergency drills, the building wardens went around to check on people. I was asked, "How are you?". This struck a chord with me that hasn't stopped vibrating. A simple three word question: "How are you?"**

With everything that is happening to us, all the local, national and global tribulations, our daily work, our striving for balance and sunshine in our lives, that little moment of someone asking me "How are you?" became a self reflective pause. Hmmm, how am I actually doing?

At that time I was quite happy and feeling fine: "Thank you for asking!"

However, that was last year. Time moves on and things change. There have been terrible events with reverberations that will never stop as long as there are still lessons to learn.

For example, an acquaintance of



mine was noticeably absent from various events so I checked in on her. It turns out that there were a lot of family, health and work issues on her plate. She was embarrassed by the situation she was in. She didn't cause the circumstances - indeed, her job is to fix things. However, her immersion in it all was threatening to overwhelm her.

What do we do for her and other people that look after people? How do we recognise that inserting ourselves into their busy day is a good thing? Is our friend connecting like normal? When did you last check on their wellbeing?

I don't know the answers. I am

not a professional health provider but I suggest reminding our friends that sunshine still exists. No extra pressure, no further demands on them. Give our carers time to take a breath before they tread their path again.

Simply ask, "How are you?"

It is a simple question that you could ask the Queen, your spouse or your presbyter. Give them time to recognise their own need when they are otherwise so wrapped up in surviving the grind that they aren't taking the time to ask themselves, "Actually, how am I doing?"

I think I helped my friend just a

little. Her problems are not mine to take on board; I couldn't fix them if I tried. But I can offer a moment's respite, a friendly ear, and well-meaning but possibly pointless advice. It starts with the simple question: "How are you doing?"

Hurihia tō aroaro ki te rā tukuna tō ātārangi kia taka ki muri i a koe.

Turn your face toward the sun and let the shadows be cast behind you.

Nāku noa nei.

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Not everything can be fixed with a cup of tea and a biscuit. If you, or someone you know, needs to talk further, then please seek help. You are not alone.

**LIFELINE** - counselling and support 0800 543 354 (0800 LIFELINE) or text 4357 (HELP)

**SAMARITANS** - confidential support for anyone who is lonely or in emotional distress 0800 726 666

**HEALTHLINE** - for advice from trained registered nurses, including information about local health services throughout New Zealand. 0800 611 116

**FAMILY AND COMMUNITY SERVICES NATIONAL DIRECTORY** - for information

about community services that can help with issues relating to parenting, special needs, family support, family violence, custody and access, child behaviour, life skills, counselling, addiction, sexual abuse, grief and loss. [www.familyservices.govt.nz/directory](http://www.familyservices.govt.nz/directory)

**MAORI HEALTH PROVIDER DIRECTORY** - several Māori health providers are contracted to District Health Boards, or iwi and kaupapa Māori organisations that work independently throughout Aotearoa - contact a provider in your area to find out more about what is available.

[www.health.govt.nz/your-health/servicesand-support/health-careservices/Māori-healthprovider-directory](http://www.health.govt.nz/your-health/servicesand-support/health-careservices/Māori-healthprovider-directory)