

Forgiveness happens in relationship. There is always a receiver and a giver. It happens when individuals dare to reveal their vulnerability. It happens when wrongs are confessed and released without excuse. It happens when there is clear desire to make a fresh start. It is a two-way street.

We all know we are not perfect; that we make mistakes. We know that in the turmoil of change things are said which are better left unsaid; but fail to own up to that error. Instead we allow our priorities and preferences to take precedence over promises made or community decisions and practices. We must admit that we do find it easier to ask forgiveness than to ask permission.

Jesus was addressing the man's need for physical healing; healing from the pain of rejection and isolation that his physical condition caused due to the notion that physical conditions were sign of one's sinful behavior. He recognized the action of the friends who brought the paralyzed man to him as faith-action. They believed the man deserved healing that he was not a sinner; they believed that Jesus could heal the man. They trusted God's grace embodied in Jesus Christ. The man was healed.

Joshua challenged a people who had encountered numerous challenges to their faith. In order to survive in foreign lands they found it had become necessary to adopt alien worship practices --- to look as though they had assimilated. The effect was that some aspects of the culture in which they resided infiltrated their own faith understanding and practice.

Joshua called the leaders together. He reminded them of their long history of God's presence and protection and provision. He offered them a choice. He called them to renew their faith in God. "Choose this day whom you will serve." The people said "Yes!"

This congregation has known God's presence as community ministries and church programs have begun and developed and let go. It has known God's leading into merger and continued ministry. Over the years there have been moments of anxiety and mistrust, hurt and confusion. Scars and bruises remain.

New Horizons has also made a commitment to continue; to discover anew the opportunity for mission and ministry God is leading them. In this Service for Wholeness we are invited to open ourselves to the power of Christ's Spirit; to experience Christ's presence as we reflect on history and relationships. We are called to release the hurt and bad feelings that separate us --- to let go of them. We are called to welcome renewal; to become open to all the possibilities that new life can bring. Enter now with confidence and faith into this time of prayer and reflection and renewal.