This is what love is: it is not that we have loved God, but that he loved us and sent his Son to be the means by which our sins are forgiven.

1 John 4: 10

Liturgy for Years 9 to 13

The Courage to Forgive

Preparation:
Map of the world torn into five pieces and given to various students. Each reader will be given a part of the map and will place it on the prayer focus in turn. They need to be able to name the issues for each of those parts of the world. So a prior task might be to have a smaller world map with black lines drawn to show where it will be ripped up. Each of these areas could be numbered with a brief list of issues.
For example:
1. Middle East (religious conflict)
2. Africa (land conflict)
3. Latin America (socio-political conflict)
4. Oceania (environmental migrants)
5. South East Asia (refugees)

A copymaster of the world map is on the next page.

Six readers to prepare their sections to read aloud, linked to a part of the map
Four readers for the final blessing
Prayer focus with a candle and a crucifix
Scripture readings ready
Chart with the transformation statements for the class to read aloud
Copy of the blessing for each student
Songs prepared

Arrange to have the class seated in a circle.

Liturgy Leader
We come together today asking for God’s forgiveness for all the wrong we have done to others and to ourselves. We are called to forgive others and ourselves so that we may be renewed as people and as followers of Jesus. In praying for forgiveness, we especially pray for forgiveness by those people who are involved in and suffering from the effects of conflict around the world. We pray that God will help people in all countries to open their hearts and to forgive past hurts, and to allow everyone to grow in peace and justice.

Let us begin with the sign of our baptism.

Ki te ingoa o te Matua, o te Tamaiti, o te Wairua Tapu.
Āmene
Liturgy leader
As part of God’s family we need to think about other people and how our actions can affect them. Jesus showed us how to be merciful so we ask for the courage to forgive ourselves and others. The response to these prayers is:
For what we have done and for what we have failed to do,
we seek forgiveness.

All: For what we have done and for what we have failed to do,
we seek forgiveness.

Reader 1
Jesus, you ask us to forgive those who hurt us, but we often fail to forgive because of pride and anger.

All: For what we have done and for what we have failed to do,
we seek forgiveness.

Reader 2
Jesus, you call us to reconcile with those people and nations we have discriminated against, yet we often continue to be prejudiced against others.

All: For what we have done and for what we have failed to do,
we seek forgiveness.

Liturgy leader What conflict exists in the part of the world you are holding?
Reader 1 names one and then places the torn piece of map as part of the prayer focus.

Reader 3
Jesus, you call on all peoples to live in peace and harmony by sharing resources, respecting differences and acting with honesty and mercy. The world news is full of stories where we have failed to live up to this model.

All: For what we have done and for what we have failed to do,
we seek forgiveness.

Liturgy leader What conflict exists in the part of the world you are holding?
Reader 2 names one and then places the torn piece of map as part of the prayer focus.

Reader 4
Jesus, we read in the Gospel of John that we should not judge or condemn others. You ask us to forgive and show compassion to others, yet we continue to fail at times through our words and actions.

All: For what we have done and for what we have failed to do, we seek forgiveness.

Liturgy leader What conflict exists in the part of the world you are holding?
Reader 4 names one and then places the torn piece of map as part of the prayer focus.

Reader 5
Jesus, millions do not know you and to us who do, what is the difference? What is the point of your presence if our lives do not show your forgiveness and love?
All: For what we have done and for what we have failed to do, we seek forgiveness.

Liturgy leader What conflicts exist in the part of the world you are holding?
Reader 5 names one and then places the torn piece of map as part of the prayer focus.

Liturgy Leader
No matter what we have done, Jesus offers us the chance to try again. Saint Paul, one of his early followers, was responsible for the deaths of many Christians before he had a change of heart. Listen to what the Bible says about Paul (who was first known by the name Saul).

The first reading tells us how Saul approves the murder of Stephen, a Christian deacon, but Stephen forgives him and the others involved; the second reading describes Saul's conversion on the road to Damascus.

Reader 5:
A reading from the Acts of the Apostles 8: 1-3

Then they dragged [Stephen] out of the city and began to stone him; and the witnesses laid their coats at the feet of a young man named Saul. While they were stoning Stephen, he prayed, "Lord Jesus, receive my spirit." Then he knelt down and cried out in a loud voice, "Lord, do not hold this sin against them." When he had said this, he died. And Saul approved of their killing him.

Reader 6:

Meanwhile Saul, still breathing threats and murder against the disciples of the Lord, went to the high priest and asked him for letters to the synagogues at Damascus, so that if he found any who belonged to the Way, men or women, he might bring them bound to Jerusalem. Now as he was going along and approaching Damascus, suddenly a light from heaven flashed around him. He fell to the ground and heard a voice saying to him, “Saul, Saul, why do you persecute me?” He asked, “Who are you, Lord?” The reply came, “I am Jesus, whom you are persecuting. But get up and enter the city, and you will be told what you are to do.” The men who were travelling with him stood speechless because they heard the voice but saw no one. Saul got up from the ground, and though his eyes were open, he could see nothing; so they led him by the hand and brought him into Damascus. For three days he was without sight, and neither ate nor drank.

The Word of the Lord.

All: Thanks be to God.

Liturgy Leader
After several days, God told Ananias, a holy man in Damascus, to cure Saul’s blindness and baptise him. Ananias said to Saul: “Jesus himself sent me, the one whom you saw on the road as you were coming here. He sent me so that you might see again and be filled with the Holy Spirit.” After that, Saul, who became known as Paul, was to be one of the most faithful and energetic of Jesus’ followers.

If Jesus could forgive Paul’s sins, he certainly will forgive ours.

Let us now talk to Jesus about our need for his love and forgiveness because of the harm we have done to others. Close your eyes and picture Jesus sitting in your living room at home. Go and sit beside him and talk to him about something that might be bothering you. Ask him to forgive you for any wrong you may have done this day.

(Allow two or three minutes for this silent prayer)
**Action**

*Devise an appropriate action which may have emerged from the student responses during Social Justice Week.*

**Examination of conscience**

**Liturgy leader**

Paul was transformed because God forgave him. As we have reflected on being a people of forgiveness and healing in a broken world, let’s now stand and commit ourselves to viewing all members of our community in a new perspective as we read these statements:

What is it in our lives that needs transformation?

*Speak these aloud from a chart. Add any other actions that you choose to take.*

- I will be a peacemaker at home.
- I will write to a politician to complain of unjust laws.
- I will challenge any racist or discriminatory comments.
- I will not participate in violent actions or gestures.
- I will make time to lend a hand or comfort someone who is sad.
- I will take the time to raise funds for a cause that seeks just solutions.
- I will not be afraid to question structures that alienate and marginalise people.

For what we have done and for what we have failed to do, we seek forgiveness.

For what we now choose to do, as people of justice, we ask for your grace and wisdom.

**Blessing**

*Students take a copy of the blessing from the basket and form one large circle*

**Liturgy leader**

Let’s close with a blessing for all those we have hurt in some way:

*Invite four student voices to read aloud the following:*

May we …
Free ourselves from the chains
Of forlorn resentment;
Bring warmth again to
Where the heart has frozen

In order that beyond the walls
Of our cherished hurt
And chosen distance
We may be able to
Celebrate the gifts they brought,

Learn and grow from the pain
And prosper into difference

Wishing them the peace
Where spirit can summon
Beauty from wounded space.

*From ‘For lost friends’ by John O’Donohue, Benedictus, 2007*
Sing: Choose from:
Peace song
Dona nobis pacem
Christ be our light
Lord, make me an instrument

Your own choice

There is an Appendix, Reflection on Forgiveness, which teachers might like to incorporate into this liturgy in some way.