**Self-Compassion Meditation**

**Introduction:** Compassion involves more than just caring about others. We also need to show compassion to ourselves. Learning to forgive, love and accept ourselves frees us from guilt over past mistakes and opens us up to a more positive future.

**To begin:** For this exercise, facilitators should read the meditation below for participants. An alternative to these meditations are group-led prayer circles led by clergy, with a focus on compassion and a reflection on a biblical verse or spiritual quote.

Ask participants to sit comfortably in a chair with feet planted on the floor, legs uncrossed and hands resting on the tops of their thighs. Participants are also welcome to sit cross-legged on the floor or even lay down on a comfortable beach towel. Choose a quiet room or outdoor space with limited distractions. Read the following text slowly, softly and calmly, pausing for a few deep breaths between each line.

**Meditation to be read aloud:** (Approx. 10-12 minutes)

**Line 1:** Close your eyes and take a few deep breaths, in and out, through your nose. With each exhale, allow yourself to sink into your chair, feeling completely supported.

**Line 2:** Take a moment to scan your body from head to toe. If you notice any areas of tension, see if you can soften those muscles with each exhale.

**Line 3:** You may notice thoughts going through your mind. Gently acknowledge these thoughts without judgment and then return to your breath. If they come back again, simply acknowledge them once again and again return to your breath.

**Line 4:** Now, begin to tune in to your emotions. Without judging them as good or bad, and without trying to change them in any way, simply become aware of them.

**Line 5:** Notice how becoming aware of these thoughts may have affected how your body feels. Once again, if you notice any areas of discomfort, see if you can gently soften those muscles with each exhale. If necessary, shift your body in a way that is more comfortable.

**Line 6:** Slowly bring your hands to rest over your heart and continue to breath deeply.

**Line 7:** Repeat silently to yourself, “I forgive myself for past mistakes.” If you find yourself cringing at those words, pause, and try again. “I forgive myself for past mistakes.”

**Line 8:** Next, say to yourself, “I accept myself as I am.” If you find yourself disagreeing with this statement, try to avoid analyzing why you resist this statement. Simply notice what thoughts and emotions arise, acknowledge them and return to your breath.

**Line 9:** Repeat one more time, “I accept myself as I am.”

**Line 10:** Lastly, silently tell yourself, “I like who I am.” Repeat this one more time. “I like who I am.” Rest your hands in your lap and take a few more deep breaths before opening your eyes.

**Follow-up questions:**

*How do you feel?*

*Did you have trouble letting go of thoughts?*

*Were you surprised by emotions that surfaced?*

*Did you find yourself resisting one or more of these statements?*

*Did you observe anything unusual or interesting during your meditation?*

*Is there anything else you’d like to share about this experience?*