

Gracious God, help us to be aware of your loving disruption of our lives. Give us the courage to work with you, and with each other, to transform our hurting world. Empower us with your Spirit that we might break the silence of sexual violence. Help us listen and move together, from fear and pain towards your realm of peace and justice. In Jesus' name we pray, Amen.

Benediction

May God our Creator renew in us the creative Spirit that brings healing and life to our world.

May Jesus the Christ, uphold us in grace and love.

May the Holy Spirit fill us with courage to be bearers of God's song of hope in the world. **Amen.**

God's peace be with you. **And also with you.** *A sign of peace is exchanged.*

Song: We shall go out with hope of resurrection

We shall go out with hope of resurrection;
we shall go out, from strength to strength go on;
we shall go out and tell our stories boldly;
tales of a love that will not let us go.

We'll sing our songs of wrongs that can be righted;
we'll dream our dream of hurts that can be healed;
we'll weave a cloth of all the world united
within the vision of new life who sets us free.

We'll give a voice to those who have not spoken;
we'll find the words for those whose lips are sealed;
we'll make the tunes for those who sing no longer,
expressive love alive in every heart.

We'll share our joy with those who are still weeping,
raise hymns of strength for hearts that break in grief,
we'll leap and dance the resurrection story
including all in circles of our love. *(Words: June Boyce-Tillman; Tune: Londonderry Air)*

Musicians were led this week by Judy Homburg, and Ruth Farrent led the singing.
Thanks to David on the A-V today.

Please join us for morning tea in the hall for light refreshments and conversation. Anyone experiencing sexual or physical violence are encouraged to ring 1800-RESPECT, a national telephone support line.



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Pilgrim
Uniting Church

9.30am
Community Worship

Sunday, 28th April 2019

Easter 2
COCU32C

Break The Silence Sunday



<https://breakthesilencesunday.org> This resource has been adapted by Rev Sandy Boyce, from the 2019 Break the Silence Sunday resource with prayers by Rev Moira Finley. More information on the SA Synod website, sa.uca.org.au

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What is Break The Silence Sunday (BTSS)?

BTSS is an effort to open up a conversation within the church about rape and sexual assault. This may be an aspect of domestic violence, or it may be rape and sexual assault by strangers, striking at random in the community. This initiative began in the United States from a variety of faith communities, each with a deep appreciation and experience of the wisdom in the breadth of the Christian tradition. The idea of creating a dedicated Sunday in the church calendar, the Fourth Sunday of April each year, has now gone global.

At the 2019 SA UCA Presbytery and Synod meeting, it was agreed to adopt the last Sunday in April for Break the Silence Sunday. It is a time:

- * for the church to learn together about the realities of rape and sexual violence;
- * to support survivors by creating a place where they can tell their stories, feel loved and supported, and find encouragement on their healing journey;
- * to prayerfully consider ways to be advocates for change, creating a future where rape is a memory.

Why does this matter?

Sexual violence is highly prevalent in our society. 'Sexual assault' covers a wide range of unwanted sexual behaviours that are often used by offenders as a way to assert power and control over their victims. Yet forms of sexual violence such as child sexual abuse, sexual assault and sexual exploitation remain some of the most under-reported of serious offences. Research has found that many people in the community hold attitudes and beliefs that justify, conceal, excuse, or minimise sexual victimisation. Victim/survivors often do not speak out about these experiences because of fear, shame and the lack of community understanding about the range of circumstances in which sexual violence occurs, and its impact on victim/survivors.

Sexual violence often intersects with other forms of harm such as family and domestic violence, bullying, and interpersonal violence more broadly. Sexual victimisation also has complex relationships with mental health, relationships, parenting, alcohol and other drugs, and social disadvantage. These intersections can present challenges for prevention efforts, policy development and service responses.

Sexual violence is a major health and welfare issue. It occurs across all ages, socio-economic and demographic groups but mainly affects women and children. Indigenous women, young women and pregnant women are particularly at risk.

Almost 1 in 5 women (18%) and 1 in 20 men (4.7%) have experienced sexual violence (sexual assault and/or threats) since the age of 15. Over a lifetime that statistic for women rises to 1 in 4 women who will be victims of rape in their lifetime.

Chorus

God is holding your life, God is holding your life,
God is holding your life, we believe.
God is holding your life, God is holding your life,
God is holding your life, we believe.

Turn down your gaze upon the earth.
Where is the One who never sleeps?
We call on One who guards you now:
Your spirit safe in holy keep. *Chorus*

Venturing out or coming home,
'neath heat of day or cool of night,
we call on One who hears your voice
and comes to heal and keep your life. *Chorus* (Words: Richard Bruxvoort Colligan, 2006)

The offering will be collected during this song. A portion of the offering will be given to a rape/sexual assault support network.

Prayer Of Dedication

Generous God, we bring you these gifts, signs and symbols of our hope and gratitude. We entrust them to you in faith that the work Christ began – listen to the stories of God's people, healing the brokenness of the world, and restoring creation – might continue in us and through us. Grant us the courage to listen, to pray, and to speak out. In faith we pray, Amen.

Committing Ourselves To Change

In the presence of one another, we pledge ourselves to ending the violence of rape and sexual assault, working towards a vision of the Beloved Community where all can live in dignity and peace. We acknowledge the reality of rape and sexual violence, a plague that brings hopelessness and fear to our siblings here, and around the world. We stand in solidarity with those who have been victims. We promise to be open to their stories, and with the grace of God, to listen without judgment. We know the promise of wholeness, and hope that Jesus came to bring to the world.

We affirm the promise of God's love for all the survivors in our world, those whose stories are known to us, and those whose stories are still shrouded in silence and fear. We know that we have not done enough, that we have been silent when those around us have been struggling. We look forward with hope, trusting in God's ability to give us strength to listen with courage, and to be silent no longer. We believe that the future depends on us. We believe that there is something we can, and must do, as people of the Good News, and as members of one human family, to end the violence of rape and sexual assault. We recognize that we cannot do this alone. We know we must learn to depend on each other, and on God, in the struggle to end sexual violence, and create justice.

Sung response: Spirit open my heart (Words: Ruth Duck)

(Chorus only - please remain seated)

Spirit open my heart
To the joy and pain of living
As you love may I love
In receiving and in giving
Spirit, open my heart

We pray for that healing this day, O God.
We pray for your love and grace to be poured out abundantly
on all who have been wounded by sexual assault
– the survivors and all those that love them.
May your healing presence guide each survivor
in their path towards wholeness, and hope.
May your courageous Spirit fill all of us this day.
Give us the strength to listen, to speak out, to be bold,
and to trust in you completely.
Give us what we need to comfort those who struggle,
and the commitment we need to work tirelessly
for the wholeness of all your people.

Sung response: Spirit open my heart *(please remain seated)*

These, and all our prayers, we offer in the name of Jesus:

**Eternal Spirit,
Earth-maker, Pain-bearer, Life-giver,
Source of all that is and that shall be,
Father and Mother of us all,
Loving God, in whom is heaven:
The hallowing of your name echo through the universe!
The way of your justice be followed by the peoples of the world!
Your heavenly will be done by all created beings!
Your commonwealth of peace and freedom
sustain our hope and come on earth.
With the bread we need for today, feed us.
In the hurts we absorb from one another, forgive us.
In times of temptation and testing, strengthen us.
From trials too great to endure, spare us.
From the grip of all that is evil, free us.
For you reign in the glory of the power that is love,
now and for ever. Amen.**

Song: God Is Holding Your Life (for reflection)
audio: <https://psalmimmersion.bandcamp.com/track/god-is-holding-your-life-ps-121>

Lift up your eyes, behold the hills.
From where will help and rescue come?
We call on One who made the earth,
who blessed the stars, the moon and sun.

Liturgy For Break The Silence Sunday

God of Creation

1.
God of Creation
Gentle life-giver
Present at birth, and
all through our days
Author of sunrise
Song in the night sky
Here in this place, we
offer our praise

2.
Jesus, Companion
teacher and healer
friend of the grieving,
suffering, the poor
Stand with your people
whisper among us
promise of mercy
goodness for all

3.
Spirit of Comfort
blow through Creation
stir up new life, breathe
peace through our world
Healer of hearts, and
hope for tomorrow
weave all our sorrows
into new dawn

4.
Here we give thanks for
life in its fullness
blessings received
your gifts to us all
Make us a people
filled with compassion
selflessly giving
serving your world

(Words: Craig Mitchell; Tune: Morning has Broken 2010)

Video: My name is Luka: Suzanne Vega
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VZt7J0iaUD0>

My name is Luka
I live on the second floor
I live upstairs from you
Yes I think you've seen me before
If you hear something late at night
Some kind of trouble, some kind of fight
Just don't ask me what it was.....
I think it's because I'm clumsy
I try not to talk too loud
Maybe it's because I'm crazy
I try not to act too proud
They only hit until you cry
After that you don't ask why
You just don't argue anymore....
Yes, I think I'm okay
I walked into the door again
If you ask that's what I'll say
And it's not your business anyway
I guess I'd like to be alone
With nothing broken, nothing thrown
Just don't ask me how I am....

Welcome

Welcome to worship. Today we stand with our sisters and brothers who have been victims of rape and sexual assault. We witness to their pain, and their strength; to their questions, and their faith; to what keeps them up at night, and what they need from us, as individuals and as communities of faith. Today we break the silence of complicity and fear, and through it all trust in the good news of God's incredible love for us, and for all the world.

"The Uniting Church in Australia believes that all people are made in the image of God and as such we should accept every individual regardless of race, age, creed or gender. As a Christian community, we believe that God reaches out to us in love and acceptance and that our relationships with each other should express love and respect and not be abused. As a community of faith we are committed to providing a place in society where human beings can explore what it means to be made in the image of God". (*excerpt, UCA SA Safe Place Statement*)

Acknowledgement of Land

We acknowledge the land of the Kurna people on which this church stands, and their Elders past, present and emerging. We lament that sexual assault is a problem in most communities: black and white. We also lament that Aboriginal people experienced extremely high levels of physical and spiritual violence by the early colonial settlers, and in particular that the Aboriginal women experienced high levels of sexual abuse by the new arrivals. Even today, Aboriginal women find it hard to access support services in relation to sexual abuse, and for culturally appropriate counselling, and for their claims to be taken seriously by police and the court system.

And so this morning we commit ourselves afresh to our Aboriginal brothers and sisters, as together we seek justice and reconciliation, healing and wholeness, and communities free from sexual abuse.

Call To Worship

We come this day trusting in God's grace, confident of Jesus' love, and aware of the Spirit's guidance. We come this day anxious and unsure, hurting and frightened, confused and hopeful. We come this day to listen, to hear, and to speak out. We come this day to break the silence!

Gathering Prayer

O God, Life giver, Pain bearer,
You know what our siblings hold in their hearts, and minds.

Open us, Holy One.

You know the things they are afraid to speak,
because they have been silenced by their own shame,
and by our discomfort and fear.

Open us, Holy One.

Open our hearts, our minds, and our spirits
to the stories of those who have survived
the worst we do to one another.

Open us, Holy One.

Reading: John 20: 19-31

Witness

Song: We cannot measure how you heal
Tune: Ye banks and braes (Scottish Traditional)

We cannot measure how you heal
or answer every sufferer's prayer,
yet we believe your grace responds
where faith and doubt unite to care.
Your hands, though bloodied on the cross,
survive to hold and heal and warn,
to carry all through death to life
and cradle children yet unborn.

The pain that will not go away,
the guilt that clings from things long past,
the fear of what the future holds,
are present as if meant to last.
But present too is love which tends
the hurt we never hoped to find,
the private agonies inside,
the memories that haunt the mind.

So some have come who need your help
and some have come to make amends,
as hands which shaped and saved the world
are present in the touch of friends.
Lord, let your Spirit meet us here
to mend the body, mind and soul,
to disentangle peace from pain,
and make your broken people whole. (*John Bell, Iona community*)

A Time Of Prayer

Holy One, you filled the world with your love, and your Spirit,
breathing into each of us the breath of life.
You named each of us, and claimed each of us as your very own,
but some of us, some of your beloved children
have been hurt, deep in their souls.
Some have experienced great violation through rape, abuse, incest,
harassment, stalking, trafficking, and assault.
They come, asking to be heard, needing to be healed by your unending
love, asking us to stand with them, and to work for justice.

I will come to you in the silence
 I will lift you from all your fear
 You will hear My voice
 I claim you as My choice
 Be still, and know I am near
 I am hope for all who are hopeless
 I am eyes for all who long to see
 In the shadows of the night,
 I will be your light
 Come and rest in Me
 Do not be afraid, I am with you
 I have called you each by name
 Come and follow Me
 I will bring you home
 I love you and you are mine
 I am strength for all the despairing
 Healing for the ones who dwell in shame
 All the blind will see, the lame will all run free
 And all will know My name
 Do not be afraid, I am with you
 I have called you each by name
 Come and follow Me
 I will bring you home
 I love you and you are mine
 I am the Word that leads all to freedom
 I am the peace the world cannot give
 I will call your name, embracing all your pain
 Stand up, now, walk, and live
 Do not be afraid, I am with you
 I have called you each by name
 Come and follow Me
 I will bring you home
 I love you and you are mine *(Songwriters: Peter De Angelis / Robert P. Marcucci)*

Invitation To Confession

We have, as the church and as its individual members, too often been silent when the lives of those who we know have been shattered by sexual violence. We have shied away from those who would share their stories, afraid of what we might hear, of what it might mean for us, and for our lives. We have been quick to ask questions - what were you doing, what were you wearing, why didn't you fight back - placing blame on survivors instead of where it belongs, with the perpetrators. Together, trusting in God's grace, let us confess our responsibility in creating and perpetuating a culture of silence.

Assurance Of God's Grace

Christ affirmed that giving one cup of listening is worth a world of blessing. We are forgiven, and given a chance to listen and love again.

Open us that together
 we may listen with compassion,
 and speak with conviction
 that we may no longer be silent.
Open us, Holy One. Amen.

Song: Sfp7 Come and find the quiet centre

(Ruth will sing the first line of the first verse. Please then join in with the song, which will be unaccompanied)

Breaking The Silence: A Time For Prayer

Silence in worship can be powerful, a time for people to listen to the voice of their heart and soul and to God. However, this is Break The Silence Sunday, a time to no longer keep silence. This time of prayer seeks to provide some silence, acknowledging the reality of rape and sexual assault, but also breaking the silence of our complicity. In Australia, sexual assault happens once every 21 minutes (on average). That is, once, every twenty one minutes... A silence of 21 seconds is held, then a bell is chimed

Once, in every twenty one minutes someone in Australia is sexually assaulted, and the church has been deafeningly silent.
A silence of 21 seconds is held, then a bell is chimed

Survivors have been shamed into silence, afraid to speak the truth of their experiences. When they have dared, they have been met with pity, contempt, hurtful and dangerous theologies, and victim blaming.
A silence of 21 seconds is held, then a bell is chimed

The time for our silence as the church is over. Rev Dr Martin Luther King, Jr once said, "In the end we will remember, not the words of our enemies, but the silence of our friends."

It is time for us, the body of Christ, to recognise those who have experienced rape and sexual assault, and to be outspoken about this violence. It is time for us to open our hearts, our minds, and our churches to the stories of survivors, to share with them the hope of God's grace that is with us in our moments of deepest despair, and can in time bring hope.

A silence of 21 seconds is held, then a bell is chimed

Now! **Now is the time for us to break our silence!**
A bell is chimed

Video: "You Are Mine" by David Haas (for reflection)
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Sgm9IkTNQmc> (4.53)