

# Break The Silence Sunday

April 24, 2022



A time for the church to learn together  
about the realities of rape and sexual violence;

about ways to create a community where survivors  
can share their stories and receive support, hope, and love;

and to prayerfully consider ways in which they can be advocates  
for change in their communities, and around the world.

## Resources for Worship

<http://www.breakthesilencesunday.org>

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## Acknowledgements

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- The amazing folks of the Tri-Jo Parish United Church of Christ (Trinity UCC Shiocton, WI and St John's UCC Cecil, WI and St. John's UCC Black Creek, WI who trust me with the privilege of being their pastor, and who graciously give me time and encouragement in this work;
- My survivor siblings, particularly my support pit bull Lella Baker, who understand how hard this work is, and how incredibly important it is as well;
- My community of friends around the world who remind me that I'm not alone, and that somewhere there is always someone awake who will talk me through the struggle;
- For all the survivors who are stronger than they imagine because they get up and face each day, I hope we have done well by your stories;
- For all of you reading this who shall faithfully plan and lead worship to help us break the silence; my gratitude for your courage.

In faith and hope, *Moirra Finley*

## As We Begin

As you begin planning for Break The Silence Sunday you may feel many things, wondering if you can bring this word of hope to your congregation, and how they will respond when you do.

You could be wondering what kind of stories will be shared with you, and if you will be able to hear them with your whole heart. You might be afraid of not knowing answers that you think are needed by those who come to you with questions about this day, with stories of their own, with fears and insecurities.

You might be thinking “do we really need one more special day on the UCC calendar?”

You might be hearing the voice of that parishioner who asks, “Why do we have to do this again?” and you’re trying to find the words to tell them that the reality of rape and sexual violence need to be confronted over and over again until justice has come.

Or you might be thinking that yourself, that two years ago your congregation did something for BTSS so it’s time to move on.

Or you might be thinking, the world’s on fire and there are other things we have to be addressing.

Whatever you’re feeling, and thinking, please don’t panic. Your thoughts and feelings, and those of your parishioners, are understandable.

Yes, we’ve done this before, and we’ll do it again.

Yes, it needed a General Synod resolution and needs recognition on the UCC calendar because that’s the only way some will pay attention.

Yes, there are lots of things we can, and should be addressing and they’re all interconnected (the way we treat other people is mirrored in the way we treat creation).

This is a journey, and every step counts, no matter how tentative.

So sit in a comfortable place, take a few breaths, and then pray this prayer for yourself whether you are clergy or not because you (yes, you) are the one we need, in this moment, to raise their voice for survivors of sexual violence...

## **A Prayer For Hesitant Clergy**

by the Rev Don Niederfrank, 22 October 2015

Divine Companion, you have encouraged and comforted me  
at so many times,  
in so many places,  
with so many persons.

One more time, I ask, though afraid even in my asking,  
be with me.

Strengthen my trembling knees,  
that I may stand with those who have too often and too long stood alone.

Call to me in the tumult of my self-focused anxiety,  
that I may bring your Presence, your Peace, to those who terror is real.

Deliver me from my silencing fears  
that I may speak your Word.

Holy Shepherd, I am yours. Send me to those you love.

## Break The Silence Sunday 2022

We are living in the third year of the global health crisis that is covid-19. In response to the virus we changed just about every part of the way we live. In these years we have had social distancing and isolation. In many places in my part of the world, school became virtual and many who could were required to work from home, but both of those practices revealed problems in our society including lack of broadband internet access, lack of childcare, and the classism that resulted in someone telling me that “the important people” were working from home while store clerks, delivery drivers, utility workers, farmers and farm workers, factory workers, and more, the people on whom our society depends were on the front lines, often with little or no sick leave, having to work through whatever ills came their way.

And all of that is even before we consider what happened in other countries: places where social distancing simply isn't possible; places where basic hygiene is challenging because of limited or no access to clean water; places where there isn't internet so schools simply shut down completely. Worldwide, our medical facilities and workers are overwhelmed, exhausted from fighting not only Covid, but the stream of misinformation that has made their work all the much harder. In the midst of this some churches and communities have returned to online only worship, while others have not returned to in-person worship since the initial shut-downs.

And we are a world more at war than we were when the year began. The Russian invasion of Ukraine is in its fifth week with widespread destruction and masses of refugees pouring out of the country. For those that remain, or who have no way of leaving, the toll of living in a war zone continues to mount. And sadly, though not surprisingly, we are seeing a new group of survivors of rape in conflict. The work of the SEMA Network – the global network of victims & survivors to end wartime sexual violence – is on the ground in Ukraine, and reports of what is happening are heart breaking. (You can find more about SEMA's work at <https://www.semanetwork.org/> and the work of the Dr Denis Mukwege Foundation at <https://www.mukwegefoundation.org/>)

And while war in Ukraine has captured the world's attention, there are wars raging in other places including the Tigray state of Ethiopia, Yemen, Syria, Palestine, among the Rohingya people of Myanmar, and the Uyghur people of China. In all those places, in our own cities and neighborhoods, and everywhere around the world, sexual violence continues. Rates are rising as the frustration of the pandemic, rising prices, global supply shortages, and more add to people's inability to handle the stresses, and their anger turns towards others.

So, what do we do about Break The Silence Sunday (BTSS) in 2022?

BTSS isn't something that, at least in my personal and pastoral opinion, moves entirely online well. It's something that I believe needs the human presence, the being together in the same space. Much of being a survivor of sexual violence relates to how we honor and reclaim our physical bodies, how we occupy space with bodies that have been cruelly mistreated by others. That said, there are communities doing incredible work with their online worship experiences that could well provide a BTSS service within that space with care and integrity. And, some acknowledgement of the reality that survivors live with can be done, with faithfulness and hope, in even the simplest of in-person, online, and hybrid worship contexts.

So, BTSS, like all things these days, can be itself in many different ways, in many different spaces – both physical and online. The most important thing is that every community that engages with Break The Silence Sunday does so carefully, with the knowledge that it is a difficult, sensitive, and essential topic for the church and that there is a plan for follow-up and after-care for whatever they do.

We started in 2016, providing complete liturgies each year since, but I've come to realize that perhaps that's not enough, not the only thing we need. So this year I'm including four stand-alone prayers that can be used on April 24<sup>th</sup>, or throughout the year, smaller parts of the service that can provided repeated encouragement to folks in the pews (or at home on their sofas) that they, as survivors, are welcomed and embraced by a community of faith.

To use these prayers faithfully in worship you'll still need to do some preparation, making sure folks know that they're coming, that you'll be dealing with some hard subjects, allowing survivors and their supporters to prepare their hearts and minds, or absent themselves if they need to.

For those of you who know me well, you'll be able to testify that I am a card carrying optimist, a belief founded in the essential goodness of who we are and who we can be. But my optimist heart is tired, tired of trying to understand why the church, and the United Church of Christ in particular since that's my tradition, can't seem to speak out in support of survivors. To be clear we do good work advocating for change, for teaching about consent culture, for the work of ending rape culture and those are all incredibly important things, but they come too late for me and for my survivor siblings. We're already sitting in the church's pews, and viewing the church's online services, carrying with us in our hearts, our minds, our bodies, and our spirits the wounds the church doesn't seem willing or able to address.

I was raped in 1987, and ordained in the United Church of Christ in 2002. When I have asked questions about the church supporting survivors I've heard the same things across all these years – it's personal and private and it makes people uncomfortable – and then the platitude that we have lots of important things we have to address as the church, we can't possibly give our time to everything, and it's just not important for the church to address (that's been said quite literally in those words).

Idealistically I believed when I was told that the secret to getting on the national church's radar was to have a resolution passed at General Synod. So we did, the resolution to make BTSS part of the national church's calendar passed overwhelmingly at General Synod in Milwaukee in 2019. But then the pandemic came, and the great social upheaval of the summer of 2020, and the election of 2020, and the terrorism of January 6th, and despite sexual violence being repeatedly in the news with the #metoo movement and more, and with a resolution about supporting survivors, the message of the national church was about preventing sexual violence, about consent education, an about Thursdays in Black (an important symbolic gesture started from the World Council of Churches ... Wear a pin to declare you are part of the global movement resisting attitudes and practices that permit rape and violence. Show your respect for women who are resilient in the face of injustice and violence. Encourage others to join you."). Again, all of those are incredibly important things, but they do little if nothing for those of us who are already survivors.

The need for the church to speak out is greater than ever. In the first year of the pandemic, the number of calls I had from survivors needing to talk tripled. In the second year, that number has tripled again. Survivors are struggling, and the church is deafeningly silent.

In the seven years of BTSS work, I have been honored to hear 1,282 stories (as of 3/24/2022). Sometimes those stories are just comments of "me too", or "I'm a survivor as well", and sometimes the things that have not been spoken of in decades pour out of people at the grocery store, the gas station, the church meeting, and so many other places people see me wearing my BTSS button. We are desperately needed as survivors work on undoing the shame and guilt society has heaped upon us, and wrestle with the faith questions that being a survivor of rape and sexual assault bring about.

Supporting us, speaking to us about our holiness, saying overtly that we are welcome in the Body of Christ with our wounds, with or without forgiving our perpetrators, with the struggles and questions we have about where God was when we were victimized, helping us to find a way forward that honors our past without blame or shame – those are the tasks of supporting survivors that I believe are being done on the local level, in communities of care, but aren't being addressed by the wider church, and I can hear their silence.



Last year I wrote:

**The Body of Christ has been raped and abused and the Body of Christ must stand up to witness with and support survivors, saying repeatedly and clearly that they are believed, loved, and valued as they are.**

We must continue to do the work of education about consent, and healthy relationships, and all the hard work that needs to be done to prevent future rapes, but we must at the same time stand in solidarity with those of us for whom consent education and prevention didn't work, who bear the scars in our bodies and souls of other people's violence.

I know that what I've written today might sound critical, but it is because I want the best for the church, because I know what the church can be when it gets it right, when it's willing to stand up for and support survivors. I know this from first-hand experience – I wouldn't be here today without the support of the church I grew up in and the encouragement of the churches I serve.

BTSS is a movement of hope, even if this moment seems to be a bit of the valley of shadows. That's because it's a movement and movements take time. We can do this, even if it requires a long view. We believe that, as individuals, as congregations, and as the wider church we can do better in supporting survivors, creating space where they feel safe sharing their stories, and honoring their courage and resiliency. We can find new ways of thinking about, and talking about our faith that don't glorify suffering and don't perpetuate the abuse that so many have suffered. And we believe that we can work together to change the culture that allows sexual violence to happen, building a future where survivors can share their stories without shame, and where all can live free from sexual violence.

And if nothing else gives us reason to hope it's that you, yes you, are sitting here reading this material. If you've been with us from the beginning, thank you. Maybe your community has a supportive pastoral staff and all you need to participate fully. Maybe you're the pastor who is going to invite your congregation to observe BTSS for the first time and you're anxious, but also confident, that it's what your community needs right now.

Maybe you're reading this and thinking you'd like to suggest it to your pastor or worship committee or whoever in your context might be most supportive, and you're just not sure any of them will be. Maybe you're a survivor who thinks you're perhaps, possibly ready to share your story and hoping your faith community will receive it with grace and love.

**Whoever you are, whatever the situation you find yourself in, you are the reason Break The Silence Sunday will ultimately make healthy, sacred space for survivors in our faith communities.**

The suggested date for Break The Silence Sunday is the fourth Sunday of April. This keeps us within the national observance of Sexual Assault Awareness Month (SAAM), but it is just a suggested date. In 2022, that date is Sunday April 24<sup>th</sup>.

This is, in the UCC's calendar also Pacific Islander Asian American (PAAM) Sunday, a vital part of the diversity of our life together. There are also churches that will observe Earth Day events at the weekend, particularly given the current state of climate crisis. Please feel free to pick a time that works best for your community.

Some have held observances in October during the observance of Domestic Violence Awareness Month, remembering that much rape and sexual violence occurs within domestic relationships. Other communities observe during the summer, and still others find Lent an appropriate time to take on the challenging work of learning about sexual violence and creating space for survivors. Whatever date you choose please feel free to adapt these materials, use them for inspiration, and craft whatever you need – worship, prayer, study – that best fits the needs of your community, particularly in these days of living with Covid.

The archive of materials is available on our website and you are welcome to change and modify them so they work best for your community. All we ask is that you use proper attribution for those who have written these materials.

Please, whatever you do, we would appreciate feedback about what you liked, and didn't like, about these materials, what worked for you, what was a challenge, and what could be provided in coming years to help you better implement BTSS in your community. There's a feedback form at the end of these materials if you'd like to mail it in, or you're welcome to send questions and comments to our email at [breakthesilencesunday@gmail.com](mailto:breakthesilencesunday@gmail.com).

Again, please be in touch if there's anything here you need to talk through, if you have questions or concerns, if you need to share your story, or if you just need a cheerleader as you work towards bringing Break The Silence Sunday to your community.

Thank you for your openness to this work, welcome, and God's blessings.

Peace and grace, *Rev Moira Finley*

## **BTSS Stand Alone Prayers**

These prayers can be used with the liturgies from previous years, or as stand-alone portions of worship, but please, however you use them, do your due diligence in preparing your parish, letting them know that this sometimes difficult and challenging topic of rape and sexual violence will be a part of worship on a given date or dates. The survivors in your community need time to prepare themselves, to decide each on their own if this is something they are able to be a part of this year. The survivor allies, families, and friends need to know as well. Parents of children of different ages need time to decide if they want their children to be present – infants in arms will be fine, but young children are paying a lot of attention and it might not be appropriate for them, and teenagers should probably be there, but they need to be prepared as they're dealing with the challenges of growing, and developing into their own sexuality.

The prayers are included in print form here and are available in video on our website. We can also email you a PowerPoint or the video if you're unable to download it online. Please be in touch at [breakthesilencesunday@gmail.com](mailto:breakthesilencesunday@gmail.com)

## **We Have Come ~ Acknowledging The Reality Of Sexual Violence**

*This prayer is not necessarily one for survivors to pray. It is, instead, for those who have had the privilege of living free from these experiences, perhaps with blinders on, unaware of the reality of rape and sexual violence in our communities, and around the world. During this prayer you might consider lighting candles (or inviting survivors and allies to do so) to symbolize the experience of all those who live this reality in their daily lives.*

**One: We have come...**

Many: to listen, and to hear things that will unsettle us, and make us uncomfortable, challenging things we think about the world.

**One: We have come...**

Many: to hear the guilt, fear, and shame that survivors carry, the stories of those who have survived things we cannot begin to imagine.

**One: We have come...**

Many: to listen to what keeps our siblings up at night, to listen with compassion, and love.

**One: We have come...**

Many: to be present for survivors, doing our own spiritual work, so that we might listen without judgement or pity.

**One: We have come...**

Many: to hear the memories, and nightmares, and flashbacks; the violation, cruelty, and suffering.

**One: We have come...**

Many: to remember that not everyone survives the violation of rape and sexual assault, and that the grief and pain overwhelm many who seek to escape through self-harm, and suicide.

**One: We have come...**

Many: to commit ourselves to the messy, difficult, sometimes excruciating work of changing the world, to the path that Christ showed us, the work of making the world whole.

**One: We have come...**

Many: to remember that taking small, uncertain steps is an okay way to begin, that we do not have to do everything, but that we must do something, that we must listen, and then raise our voices for the world is depending on us.

**All: Amen.**

**Hymn ~ “We Have Come”**

by Christopher Grundy, © Hand and Soil Music, 2009; used with permission  
*(this was written to be sung acapella)*

*a cappella, with drumming*

words and music by Christopher Grundy

♩ = 170



We have come by way of strug\_ gle, We have come  
 We have come to lay our bur-dens down, we have come  
 We have come to spread your ways of peace, we have come

7



by way of pain, we have come by all your stead-fast love,  
 to shed our shame, we have come to taste your bound-less grace  
 to break the chains, we have come to stand with Jes us,

13

To Coda

1.2.



O re-vive our souls a - gain.  
 and to rise as peop - le changed.  
 lead us on in - to your reign,

19



lead us on in-to your reign, lead us on in-to your reign.

## Dear Survivor by Eric Barreras

Please look up the wonderful work that Eric is doing for survivors, particularly within the United States military, with his organization Difference Makers. Their website is:

<https://www.dm10strong.com/>

From the moment I first learned of your experience

I knew one thing was certain...

I BELIEVED you.

I may not know every detail of your life –

but in you, I see so much of myself.

And so, I'll stand by ready and willing

to support and empower you -

however that may be.

Through every tough day,

I'll give you my absolute best.

Because you're deserving of it.

You've endured through pain and hurt.

Not because you wanted to, but because you had to.

You did everything a reasonable person would

and for that, you don't own an ounce of blame.

Understand this.

Through your strength others will rise.

Because of your courage others will thrive.

Disregard the noise of the world,

and embrace the internal noise that screams from within,

“You are worthy!”

I want you to know now

that there are many others out there who understand you.

You'll never have to make this journey alone.

Whether it's a family that loves you,

or friends that adore you.

When times get rough just remember

you are strong

you are capable

you are worth it

you are a thriver.

Truly and Passionately Yours, Advocate

## To The Survivors Among Us

by Rev Moira Finley, © February 2022

This is a responsive prayer, with the congregation joining in for the last lines, some of the most important words that survivors can hear – we believe you, and we are here with you. Survivors already doubt themselves, we don't need the judgement that has come so often from the victim blaming and shaming in our society, and in our churches. The church needs to speak up, to say and mean these words, to truly be in solidarity with survivors.

To the survivors among us  
we are sorry for what you experienced,  
we are honored  
that you are here with us, and  
**we believe you.**

If your experience was  
last week,  
last year,  
or decades ago,  
**we believe you.**

If you told someone when it happened,  
or kept it to yourself,  
or can barely speak of what you lived through,  
**we believe you.**

If you reported it to authorities,  
or you didn't,  
or you couldn't,  
or you might yet,  
or you can't,  
**we believe you.**

If you knew your assailant,  
were in a relationship with them,  
or if they were a stranger,  
**we believe you.**

If you were out on a date,  
or in your own home,  
remember every detail,  
or it's all a blur,  
were a senior,  
a child,  
or somewhere in between,  
**we believe you.**

If you fought back,  
or you didn't,  
you did what you needed  
to do to survive, and  
**we believe you.**

If you need us to listen,  
or sit with you in the silence,  
or hold you while you cry,  
or give you space to scream,  
**we are here with you.**

If you are afraid,  
or ashamed,  
scared of what might happen  
if the details are known,  
**we are here with you.**

If you are wondering  
if it was all your fault,  
if you're damaged goods,  
if boys and men can really be victims,  
**we are here with you.**



If you are unsure  
if God could still love you,  
if you have a place in the church,  
if your story matters here,  
if there's enough grace for someone like you  
**we are here with you.**

To the survivors among us  
we are sorry for what you experienced,  
we are honored  
that you are here with us, and  
**we believe you.**

## Every 68 Seconds

*On average, someone in the United States is sexually assaulted every 68 seconds.<sup>1</sup> That means someone is assaulted approximately 53 times every hour, or 1,270 times every day. This prayer uses a period of sixty-eight seconds of silence to bring attention to the scope of the problem, the number of survivors in our communities, our families, and our congregations.*

*This prayer can be unsettling because when we are used to words, the silence can demand we pay attention to the urgency of this work. Resist the temptation to fill the silence. Allow the unsettledness to be real, and invite the Spirit's presence to remind us of God's love for all in our most uncomfortable moments.*

*While this prayer uses statistics for the United States, the problem is not unique to our country, and so we stand in solidarity with our survivor siblings around the world. Almost one in three women over age fifteen, or an estimated 736 million individuals, have been victims of sexual violence.<sup>2</sup>*

*If the Body of Christ is going to be whole we have to speak truth to this great injustice, this great violation of God's creation.*

One: Once, in every sixty-eight seconds...

*a silence of 68 seconds is held, then a bell is chimed*

One: Once, in every sixty-eight seconds someone in the United States is sexually assaulted.

*a silence of 68 seconds is held, then a bell is chimed*

One: Once, in every sixty-eight seconds, about 53 times while we are in worship together, and 1,280 times today someone will be sexually assaulted.

*a silence of 68 seconds is held, then a bell is chimed*

One: And while our siblings suffer this violence and violation, the church has been deafeningly silent. The church has shamed survivors, perpetuating a culture of victim blaming. The church has offered up pity, contempt, and harmful theologies when survivors dare to speak the truth of their experience.

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<sup>1</sup> Department of Justice, Office of Justice Programs, Bureau of Justice Statistics, National Crime Victimization Survey (NCVS), 2019 (2020). Sourced from RAINN (Rape Abuse Incest National Network that uses a 5-year rolling average to adjust in the year to year changes of the NCVS survey data).

<sup>2</sup> World Health Organization, on behalf of the United Nations Inter-Agency Working Group on Violence Against Women Estimation and Data (2021)

*a silence of 68 seconds is held, then a bell is chimed*

One: 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."<sup>3</sup>

*a silence of 68 seconds is held, then a bell is chimed*

One: It is time for us, the body of Christ broken by rape and sexual assault, to speak up. Our survivor siblings can wait no longer. We must open our hearts, our minds, and our churches to the stories of survivors, trusting in the grace and love of God that sustains us, and that can, in time, bring hope.

*a silence of 68 seconds is held, then a bell is chimed*

One: Now! Now is the time for us to break our silence!

*a bell is chimed*

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<sup>3</sup> Martin Luther King Jr. "The Trumpet of Conscience" Steeler Lecture, November 1967

## Silver For Survivors ~ Fundraising For Break The Silence Sunday

In the summer of 2023 (June 30 – July 4), the Thirty-Fourth General Synod of the United Church of Christ will meet in Indianapolis, Indiana. Break The Silence Sunday (BTSS) needs to be there, and to do that we need your help.

We need to be at General Synod to:

- ♥ to be a visible presence of survivors in the life of the church – we are here, part of every congregation and community and are in need of the vocal witness of the church to support our healing and wholeness;
- ♥ to provide space for survivors to tell their stories without judgement and to have those stories honored through the work of BTSS's project – Strings of Strength – that provides comfort items to survivors.
- ♥ bring the work and witness of BTSS to more communities and congregations;
- ♥ remind the national church of it's commitment at General Synod 32 in Milwaukee where it overwhelmingly approved BTSS as an observance of the entire church;
- ♥ to increase and expand our writer's pool to reflect the great diversity of God's people.

Our fundraising goal is \$5000 which will provide:

- ♥ Travel to and from Indianapolis for the BTSS team (2 people);
- ♥ Housing & food during Synod
- ♥ Booth space for BTSS in the exhibits hall
- ♥ Promotional materials for BTSS

And how, you wonder, will be find \$5000? Through Silver For Survivors.

There are 575 days between 11/4/2021 and 5/31/2023. We invite you to consider saving a silver coin every day to help the work of BTSS.

Silver dollar a day	...	\$575
Half dollar a day	...	\$287.50
Quarter a day	...	\$143.75
Dime a day	...	\$57.50
Nickel a day	...	\$28.75

Of course, these are symbolic donations and we would welcome your gift at any level to help us continue to reach out to survivors, and to make our presence in the church visible, to remind the church of its sacred calling to support survivors.

**Donations can be made:**

- ♥ Through our PayPal and Venmo accounts at: [breakthesilencesunday@gmail.com](mailto:breakthesilencesunday@gmail.com)
- ♥ By mail: checks to Break The Silence Sunday  
c/o Moira Finley  
PO Box 691  
Bonduel, WI 54107

**What about tax exempt donations & receipts?**

Break The Silence Sunday is a ministry of St. John's United Church of Christ in Black Creek, Wisconsin and therefore donations made to BTSS are tax exempt to the extent allowed by law (unless they are in-kind donations which are covered by various other laws). We can provide a receipt for your tax purposes if needed. Please be in touch.

**Questions? Concerns? Other ideas?**

Pastor Moira Finley at either [breakthesilencesunday@gmail.com](mailto:breakthesilencesunday@gmail.com) or [pastormoira73@gmail.com](mailto:pastormoira73@gmail.com)

**Survivor and need to reach out?**

Pastor Moira Finley at 715-851-3080 or [pastormoira73@gmail.com](mailto:pastormoira73@gmail.com)

**Need immediate help?**

Rape Abuse Incest National Network (RAINN) at 800-656-4673 or online at [rainn.org](http://rainn.org) for live chat and 24/7 assistance

## Strings Of Strength (SOS)

Strings of Strength is a project to provide comfort items to survivors who share their stories with the Break The Silence Sunday team. We wanted to find a way to tangibly honor those stories, to help survivors remember that they are believed, that they are strong, and that they are not alone. By creating shawls, scarves, and other items we hope to be able to provide those who share their story with something that will remind them of our common strength as survivors of sexual violence.

### Here's how it works...

- ♥ You (and maybe your group) create items of support (see suggested list of items below).
- ♥ You record the initials of the creator, and the fiber content on each item.
- ♥ You post them to BTSS (see below)
- ♥ We add a nifty little tag with your initials, fiber and care information, and a phrase of love and support (it reads "Your story is heard, believed, and held with love and grace.")
- ♥ We distribute them to survivors who share their stories at events like church conference meetings and the U.C.C.'s General Synod 2021 in Kansas City, MO.
- ♥ You enjoy the connection you've made to a survivor who now feels less alone in the world.
- ♥ You create more objects and we repeat this process until rape and sexual violence are no more.

### Suggested items include...

- ♥ shawls – something like 24" x 60", give or take
- ♥ scarves – well, you know, a scarf is sometimes skinny, sometimes not; sometimes long, sometimes not; variety is key here, but scarves are clearly skinnier than shawls in width
- ♥ wubbies – about 12" square (big washcloth?) and get carried around in backpacks and purses and such so when you need to know it's there, you just reach in and pet it;
- ♥ mini-wubbies – these would be coaster size, think about 3 or 4" square, just enough to tuck in your pocket
- ♥ bookmarks – something skinny, maybe 1" wide x 4 or 5" long
- ♥ something else you dream up that would be a way for survivors to know they are believed, loved, and not alone

## **How do we create them?**

Knit, crochet, weave, sew, needlepoint, cross-stitch, something that involves thread/string that we haven't thought of. However it is you create, create with intention, sewing or knitting or stitching in love and care for survivors.

## **Things to consider...**

- ♥ Soft – the items should be soft, a comfort, like a good and healthy hug, a sensory plus for a survivor
- ♥ Or perhaps not quite so soft – someone is making cross-stitch hearts that will go in small metal boxes (think Altoids size boxes) that could be easily carried around, they won't be soft and squishy, but rather strong and sturdy
- ♥ Colors – purple and teal are the colors for sexual assault awareness, but don't let that limit you because we know about the diversity of people in the world and how their tastes and preferences for color vary so send us your browns, yellows, greens, blues, reds, oranges, grey, and everything you've got as we're sure we will find a survivor who will fall in love with what you create; also think about pastels, and brights, and neons, and primaries, and the whole variety of colors and tones that exist in the world
- ♥ Diversity – survivors come in all kinds; men, women, and non-binary; first disclosing their experience after 70+ years and a young adult just beginning college and everything in between; of every ethnicity, and orientation, and physical abilities – our comfort items need to reflect that so go ahead and make that thing your brother loved, or the pic line cover your sister-in-law's grandfather had when he was receiving chemo, or the needle felted heart your daughter wore under her uniform while serving in the Army, or ... well, you get the idea because comfort comes in as many different ways as there are different survivors
- ♥ Care – if you're making a wearable type object please make sure to let us know about care/washing instructions so the survivor can look after your creation

## **But wait, I'm not very good at knitting, crochet, or any of that...**

Ah yes, we thought we'd get to that. You don't think you have any skills or talents to lend to this enterprise, BUT you're wrong. We don't need masterworks here. We aren't trying to win any competitions or blue ribbons. We're trying to support survivors. We've received two lovely wubbies in the mail and on the envelope it said "crocheted with love (not necessarily skillfully crocheted)", and they are absolutely beautiful and will make some survivor feel the love and solidarity of the universe. We need you and what you have to offer. So, no excuses. In knitting words ... drop those stitches, pick them up backwards, and craft on.

## **OK, but really, I can't craft...**

Alright, we won't push, but if you'd still like to help we would gladly accept donations for additional yarn, materials, packaging, storage, tags, and so on. We have PayPal and Venmo at [breakthesilencesunday@gmail.com](mailto:breakthesilencesunday@gmail.com)

## Mailing Instructions

- ♥ Attach information to each item with
  - the crafter's initials (or your group's name) AND
  - the fiber content (for example, 100% acrylic or 70% mohair/30% acrylic, and so on) AND
  - the care/washing instructions for wearable items
- ♥ Please include a contact name, return address and/or email so we can send you a thank you note for your contribution
- ♥ Mail items via whatever service you like to:
  - Break The Silence Sunday (BTSS)
  - c/o Moira Finley
  - 130 E Green Bay St
  - PO Box 691
  - Bonduel, WI 54107

### Questions that aren't answered here?

Email to [breakthesilencesunday@gmail.com](mailto:breakthesilencesunday@gmail.com) and we'll get back to you!



## Break The Silence Sunday In A Box

- ♥ Perhaps you want to have a display at your Association or Conference meeting?
- ♥ Maybe you want to give a workshop about Break The Silence Sunday?
- ♥ Or maybe you need something for your church, a space where you can put out information about Break The Silence Sunday along with your local area resources for survivors?

Then Break The Silence Sunday In A Box is for you!

You provide:

- ♥ Enthusiasm for the work of Break The Silence Sunday
- ♥ A display board (3-fold science fair type boards are most common)

We provide you with:

- ♥ Break The Silence Sunday (BTSS) brochure\*
- ♥ Strings of Strength (SOS) brochure\*
- ♥ Clergy commitment flyers\*
- ♥ Save the date cards\*
- ♥ Sample signs, wording, and pictures for your display\*
- ♥ Break The Silence Sunday business cards
- ♥ Break The Silence Sunday buttons
- ♥ Complete copies of the current year materials

Many of these items will be available electronically on our website so you can download and print them on your own, saving on shipping fees. Electronically available items are marked with an \* above.

If, however, you want us to mail you everything we can do that as well. You cover shipping costs, and consider adding a donation to help continue the work of Break The Silence Sunday. If you are interested in larger quantities of buttons, let's talk about the price and shipping directly from our supplier.

Visit the website for downloadable materials and to request anything to be mailed to you:

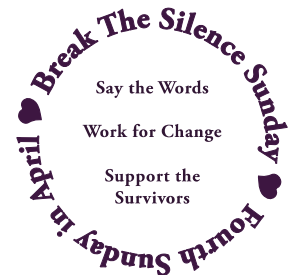
<https://breakthesilencesunday.org/btss-in-a-box/>

## Break The Silence Sunday Clergy Commitment

As a Christian pastor, as someone who tries to follow in the footsteps of Jesus of Nazareth, and as a human being committed to working for the dignity and equality of all people, I declare to survivors of sexual violence that:

- ♥ I am a person to whom you can tell your story of sexual abuse, harassment, assault, violence, and more.
- ♥ I will listen without judgement, and without condemnation.
- ♥ I will hold all you tell me in sacred confidence, within the bounds of law.
- ♥ I will listen to whatever you need to say, and however you need to say it.
- ♥ I will honor your story, and remind you of the dignity and worth you have as a child of God, created in God's own image, and I will remind you that you are more than your story.
- ♥ I will walk beside you on your healing journey, accompanying you as best as I am able, and as you need to counseling appointments, court dates, or wherever else you need me to be with you.
- ♥ I am here for you, and with you.
- ♥ I stand with you.
- ♥ I believe you.

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## Some Statistics ~ compiled by the Rev Moira Finley

- There are an average of 321,500 people (age 12 and older) raped or sexually assaulted in the United States each year. (Source – U.S. Department of Justice, Office of Justice Programs, Bureau of Justice Statistics, *National Crime Victimization Survey*. 2010-2014)
- There is an average of one sexual assault every 68 seconds in the United States. (Source - Department of Justice, Office of Justice Programs, Bureau of Justice Statistics, National Crime Victimization Survey (NCVS), 2019 (2020). Sourced from RAINN (Rape Abuse Incest National Network that uses a 5-year rolling average to adjust in the year to year changes of the NCVS survey data).
- Let's do some math with that statistic of every 68 seconds:
  - During an average song on the radio (3 minutes 30 seconds) there will be about 3 assaults;
  - During an average sitcom (30 minutes) there will be about 266 assaults;
  - During an average movie (1 hour 57 minutes) there will be about 103 assaults;
  - During a typical US football game (3 hours 12 minutes) there will be nearly 169 assaults;
  - During an office work day (8 hours) there will be 424 assaults;
  - During a single day there will be 1,270 assaults
  - During a single year there will be 463,550 assaults
- All of those numbers are for people over the age of 12. In addition to those statistics, in a given year:
  - 80,600 inmates are raped to assaulted
  - 60,000 children are sexually abused
  - 18,900 members of the United States military are on the receiving end of unwanted sexual contact
- Approximately 55% of victims are assaulted in or near their own home, and an additional 12% are assaulted in or near a relative's home. (Source: Department of Justice, Office of Justice Programs, Bureau of Justice Statistics, *Female Victims of Sexual Violence, 1994-2010*. 2013)
- As of 1998, 17.7 million women in the United States (1 out of every 6) and 2.78 million men in the United States (1 out of every 33) have been the victim of an attempted or completed rape in their lifetime (source – National Institute of Justice & Centers for Disease Control & Prevention. *Prevalence, Incidence, and Consequences of Violence Against Women Survey*. 1998)

- 15% of sexual assault and rape victims are under the age of 12 (source – U.S. Bureau of Justice Statistics, *Sex Offenses and Offenders*. 1997)
- The year in a man’s life when he is most likely to be the victim of a sexual assault is age 4. The year in a woman’s life is age 14. (Source – U.S. Bureau of Justice Statistics. *2000 Sexual Assault Of Young Children As Reported To Law Enforcement*. 2000)
- 93% of juvenile sexual assault victims know their attacker (Source – U.S. Bureau of Justice Statistics. *2000 Sexual Assault Of Young Children As Reported To Law Enforcement*. 2000)

A note on the statistics from RAINN (Rape, Abuse, Incest National Network): Sexual violence is notoriously difficult to measure, and there is no single source of data that provides a complete picture of the crime. On RAINN’s website, we have tried to select the most reliable source of statistics for each topic. The primary data source we use is the National Crime Victimization Survey (NCVS), which is an annual study conducted by the Justice Department. To conduct NCVS, researchers interview tens of thousands of Americans each year to learn about crimes that they’ve experienced. Based on those interviews, the study provides estimates of the total number of crimes, including those that were not reported to police. While NCVS has a number of limitations (most importantly, children under age 12 are not included), overall, it is the most reliable source of crime statistics in the U.S. We have also relied on other Justice Department studies, as well as data from the Department of Health and Human Services and other government and academic sources. When assembling these statistics, we have generally retained the wording used by the authors. Statistics are presented for educational purposes only. Each statistic includes a footnote citation for the original source, where you can find information about the methodology and a definition of terms.

For additional information on how the statistics are compiled, and additional crime reporting statistics please visit: <https://www.rainn.org/about-rainns-statistics>

## Some Helpful Definitions ~ by the Rev Moira Finley

Should we use survivor or victim?

It's a complicated question. Some folks think that victim is more appropriate to describe who they are, their feelings and their experience. Other folks think that survivor is more appropriate. What matters is that you listen to the person who has the lived experience of sexual violence. If you use one word and they tell you they prefer another, please respect that. Do not insist on your word to describe their experience. Listen to and respect all who have lived through these things.

Acquaintance Rape/Assault – where the perpetrator(s) is previously known to the victim; occurs in approximately 4 out of every 5 rapes/assaults in the United States; acquaintance may refer to a date (hence “date rape”), domestic partner, former partner, family member, classmate, neighbor, boss, coworker, and more.

Attempted Rape/Assault – a threat or rape or sexual assault, including verbal threats, and those made in other ways such as electronic communication (email, text), and on social media (Facebook, Tumbler, Twitter)

Domestic Violence – violence, and threats of violence, between spouses, domestic partners, and those who are co-habiting.

Force – methods used to coerce a victim into a non-consensual sex; this may include the use of a weapon, or physical violence, but also includes emotional and psychological manipulation, threats to the victim's family, the withholding of finances, intimidation, threats regarding employment or child custody, and more.

Incest – sexual contact (which may or may not include penetration) between closely related persons such as parents, children, grandparents, aunts, uncles, siblings, cousins; in legal terms incest is often described as the crime of sexual contact between people who may not be legally married

Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) – a condition resulting from the experiencing (or witnessing) of a traumatic event that causes long-term difficulty with flashbacks, intrusive memories, and severe anxiety; not all rape survivors will develop PTSD

Rape – a form of sexual assault; the U.S. Bureau of Justice Statistics defines rape as forced sexual intercourse which is defined as “vaginal, anal, or oral penetration by the offender(s)”; this also includes incidents where the penetration is by an object such as a bottle; legal definitions vary by state, and some states do not use this term at all in their laws instead they have degrees/grades of sexual assault.

Rape Culture – the way in which society blames victims of rape and sexual assault, and normalizes this violence, particularly male against female violence; the assumption that rape and sexual assault are an inevitable part of life; this includes the use of the word rape in other contexts (for example, when a sports team is defeated and commentators say “they were raped”), as well as the objectification of women’s bodies including school dress codes and purity movements that seek to control and limit women’s behaviors

Sexual Assault – sexual contact or behavior that occurs without explicit consent of the victim; this includes, but is not limited to: penetration of the victim’s body (see rape), attempted rape, forcing a victim to perform sexual acts on the perpetrator, fondling, unwanted sexual touching.

Stranger Rape/Assault – where the perpetrator(s) is previously unknown to the victim; occurs in approximately 1 of every 5 rapes/assaults in the United States.

Survivor Guilt – though most often associated with being a survivor after a mass catastrophe (such as an airplane crash), this phrase has also come to mean the guilt imposed on survivors of rape and sexual assault because of some perceived action, or inaction on their part

Victim Blaming – words and actions that imply the victim of rape or sexual assault is to blame for the actions of the perpetrator(s); this can be through questions about what the victim was wearing, why they were out alone, why they didn’t fight back, if they had been drinking or had previous sexual relations with the perpetrator, and questions about the previous sexual activity of the victim

## Resources

### General Information About Rape & Sexual Assault

- Rape Abuse Incest National Network (RAINN) – includes links to their online and telephone counseling services, <http://www.rainn.org>
- National Sexual Violence Resource Center, <http://www.nsvrc.org>
- Joyful Heart Foundation, <http://www.joyfulheartfoundation.org>
- No More (a national campaign to end sexual and domestic violence), <http://nomore.org>
- Dr Denis Mukwege Foundation ~ <https://www.mukwegefoundation.org/>  
We support survivors' demands for a world where sexual violence as a weapon of war is no longer tolerated, and bears consequences for individual perpetrators and states. We work for a future where survivors receive the holistic care and compensation they need to rebuild their lives. We create opportunities for survivors to speak out and be heard, and where they can organise to create change, influence policies, and demand justice and accountability.
- SEMA Network ~ <https://www.semanetwork.org/>  
The Global Network of Victims and Survivors of Wartime Sexual Violence, brings survivors of sexual violence together. SEMA members mobilise collectively to speak out about the realities of sexual violence in conflict and act in solidarity to bring an end to wartime sexual violence and impunity.
- “What’s Their Problem? Sharing Our Pews With Sexual Abuse Victims and Survivors”, from *Christ And Pop Culture*, <http://christandpopculture.com/whats-problem-sharing-pews-sexual-abuse-victims-survivors/>

## Resources About Recent Cases In The Media

- Representative Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez and her experience of being retraumatized by the terrorist attack on the US Capitol building: <https://www.nbcnews.com/politics/congress/aoc-leads-lawmakers-recalling-their-harrowing-accounts-capitol-siege-n1256828>
- On the case of a UK woman convicted of lying about being raped on the island of Cyprus and what it tells us about rape culture: <https://www.bbc.com/news/uk-scotland-51050656>
- On the awarding of the 2018 Nobel Peace Prize to Dr Denis Mukwege and Nadia Murad: <https://www.nobelprize.org/prizes/peace/2018/press-release/>
- On the documentary “Surviving R Kelly” and its impact on boys: [https://www.vice.com/en\\_us/article/bvgz78/sexual-assault-happens-to-boys-too?fbclid=IwAR3WGPoKS48MAhHxb8b1N6JaSF9aySp4lc\\_TmmkIVdixpxEmk8ERzSG5ew](https://www.vice.com/en_us/article/bvgz78/sexual-assault-happens-to-boys-too?fbclid=IwAR3WGPoKS48MAhHxb8b1N6JaSF9aySp4lc_TmmkIVdixpxEmk8ERzSG5ew)
- An interview with Chanel Miller [https://www.latimes.com/opinion/story/2019-09-24/abcarian-chanel-miller-sexual-assault-brock-turner?fbclid=IwAR2ZegY\\_qmvvP3fRTFCszEyuEB6nfwlN52YJ2fwIvhRC79DHMVqCBsUsH7A](https://www.latimes.com/opinion/story/2019-09-24/abcarian-chanel-miller-sexual-assault-brock-turner?fbclid=IwAR2ZegY_qmvvP3fRTFCszEyuEB6nfwlN52YJ2fwIvhRC79DHMVqCBsUsH7A)
- A speech from Dr Christine Blasey Ford about being a survivor [https://sanfrancisco.cbslocal.com/2019/10/30/christine-blasey-ford-brett-kavanaugh-supreme-court-power-to-inspire/?fbclid=IwAR3roli9OitBA5zJVwT4ZGbDr0dtITcd3pwcgPcPm9qQ2Exs79lMKRC6\\_xk](https://sanfrancisco.cbslocal.com/2019/10/30/christine-blasey-ford-brett-kavanaugh-supreme-court-power-to-inspire/?fbclid=IwAR3roli9OitBA5zJVwT4ZGbDr0dtITcd3pwcgPcPm9qQ2Exs79lMKRC6_xk)
- Very practical ideas about how to support survivors in your midst: <https://www.bustle.com/p/14-ways-to-support-sexual-assault-survivors-right-now-7739137?fbclid=IwAR28CT1TCjWj28KosMybubll8nT2LVRnFxOD4BppC6bqQ1zGrRqkOfVIP50>



## Resources on PTSD

- From the Department of Veteran's Affairs: <https://www.ptsd.va.gov/index.asp>
- From RAINN (specific to rape survivors)  
<https://www.rainn.org/articles/post-traumatic-stress-disorder>

## Resource Ideas For Family, Friends & Allies Of Survivors

- <https://www.rainn.org/articles/help-someone-you-care-about>
- Particularly for parents [https://puckermob.com/moblog/10-things-every-parent-of-a-sexually-abused-child-needs-to-know/?fbclid=IwAR3DpnmSTDFV0US9DfL-pvCk5fu1mzfxdPUUFQ3L96-ySCxY8fhvUD\\_o4Oc](https://puckermob.com/moblog/10-things-every-parent-of-a-sexually-abused-child-needs-to-know/?fbclid=IwAR3DpnmSTDFV0US9DfL-pvCk5fu1mzfxdPUUFQ3L96-ySCxY8fhvUD_o4Oc)
- Particularly to support male survivors [https://cutacut.com/2019/10/24/how-to-help-male-survivors-of-sexual-violence/?fbclid=IwAR1xteiIiYYv56GKZ4GVT\\_8es6yztJ9Z9ON-GCuxntiejRxFY01iaSY-7t0](https://cutacut.com/2019/10/24/how-to-help-male-survivors-of-sexual-violence/?fbclid=IwAR1xteiIiYYv56GKZ4GVT_8es6yztJ9Z9ON-GCuxntiejRxFY01iaSY-7t0)

## State of Wisconsin Resources

- Wisconsin Coalition Against Sexual Assault  
Telephone: 608-257-1516; <http://www.wcasa.org>  
Offers information and referral on any issue related to sexual violence; does not offer direct services to victims/survivors, but will connect them to local agencies
- County by County resources – please visit our website <http://www.breakthesilencesunday.org> and the Resources tab to find a chart which will identify sexual assault resource organizations in each Wisconsin county