

Liturgy For Break The Silence Sunday ~ April 24, 2016

Unless otherwise noted, prayers are written by the Rev Moira Finley.

Musical Prelude

Welcome

Welcome to worship. Today we stand with our sisters and brothers who have been victims of rape and sexual assault. We will witness to their pain, and their strength. We will learn how to be better advocates for them, and with them. We will start to speak out, to break the silence of complicity and fear, and through it all we will trust in the good news of God's incredible love for us, and for all the world.

Call To Worship

One: We come this day
Many: trusting in God's grace,
One: confident of Jesus' love,
Many: and attentive to the Spirit's presence.
One: We come this day
Many: to listen
One: to hear,
Many: and to speak out.
One: We come this day
All: to break the silence!

Gathering Prayer

O God, Life giver, Pain bearer,
You know what our sisters and brothers hold in their hearts, and memories,
the horrors they experienced,
the things they are afraid to speak of,
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, that together we may no longer be silent. Amen.

Hymn ~ “We Have Come”

by Christopher Grundy, © Hand and Soil Music, 2009; used with permission

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.

Acknowledging The Reality Of Sexual Violence

This prayer is not one for survivors to pray, but is rather for those who have the privilege of living with blinders on, unaware of the reality of rape and sexual assault in our communities. During this time of prayer, you might invite survivors who are able to come forward and light candles symbolizing their story, and their experience with sexual violence.

One: We come together this day in solidarity with all those who have experienced rape, and sexual violence. We come to open ourselves to the reality of the pain this violation has caused, to listen to survivor's stories without judgment, and without pity. We come to take responsibility, and to commit ourselves to the hard work of changing the violence, and sexism of our world.

One: We admit that sexual violence is real and present in our world, in our communities, in our church, and in our families. We need to face our fear.

Many: We prefer to think that the statistics are wrong, that the problem is not as big as we are told. We do not want to admit that people we know – our friends, members of our families, women and men sitting with us here this morning – have been victims of rape, sexual assault, and sexual violence.

One: We do not know how to help. We want to fix things, to make it better, to put it all behind us. We need to stop and open our hearts.

Many: We need to hear the stories of those who have lived through this violence, who have endured things we can scarcely imagine, who have lived with feelings of guilt, fear, and shame. We need to remember that not everyone survives the violence of rape and sexual assault, and to honor their memories.

One: We need to open our minds.

Many: We need to listen to what keeps our sisters and brothers up at night, the nightmares, and flashbacks, and memories.

One: We need to open our spirits.

Many: We need to honor their questions about God, about faith, about the community that is the church.

One: We know that the church can be a place for healing and hope, and we pray that we might help create that feeling in this place, in this community. We pray, O God, that you will give to those who are survivors of rape and sexual assault the courage to trust us, in even the smallest way, to share with us the stories of what they have experienced. We pray, O God, that you will give to those who are not survivors, the strength to be quiet, to listen, and then the courage to speak out in love, and compassion, to work for justice and a future free from sexual violence.

All: Amen.

Sung Response ~ "I Am Welcome" by Bryan Sirchio, used with permission

(Chorus Only)

Bryan Sirchio
www.sirchio.com

I am wel - come, I am wel - come, I am

loved, just as I am. I am

wel - come, you are wel - come, we are

loved just as we are. O

Spir - it burn that truth in - to our

hearts. I am hearts.

Breaking The Silence ~ A Time For Prayer

Silence in worship can be a most powerful thing, a time for people to listen to the voice of their heart and soul. However, this is Break The Silence Sunday, a time to speak out, 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. These statistics are for the United States, but the problem is not unique to the U.S. As we hold and break this silence, we stand with our sisters and brothers around the world who live in the shadow of rape and sexual violence.

One: Once, in every one hundred and seven seconds...

a silence of 107 seconds is held, then a bell is chimed

One: Once, in every one hundred and seven seconds someone in the United States is sexually assaulted, and the church has been deafeningly silent.

a silence of 107 seconds is held, then a bell is chimed

One: 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 107 seconds is held, then a bell is chimed

One: The time for our silence as the church is over. Dr. King once said, "In the end we will remember, not the words of our enemies, but the silence of our friends."¹ It is time for us, the body of Christ broken by rape and sexual assault, 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 107 seconds is held, then a bell is chimed

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

¹ Martin Luther King Jr. "The Trumpet of Conscience" Steeler Lecture, November 1967

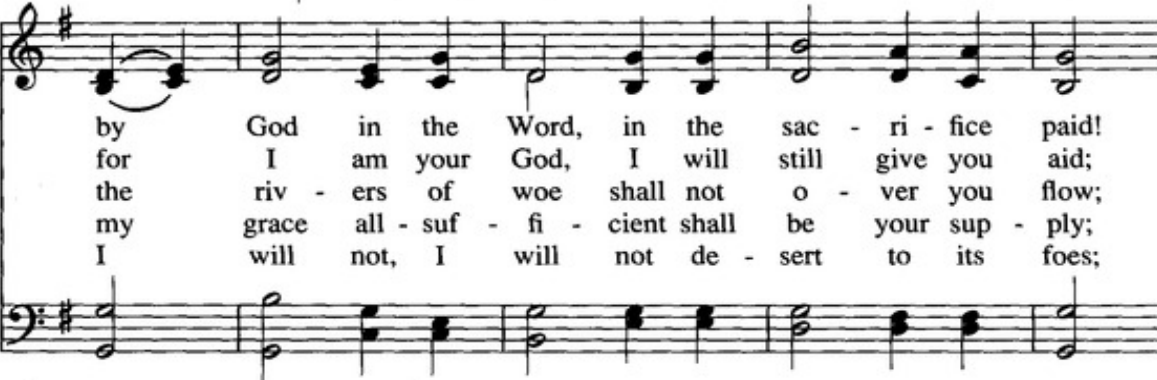
Hymn ~ New Century Hymnal #407 "How Firm A Foundation" (public domain)

Isa. 43:2-5; 2 Tim. 2:19; Heb. 13:5

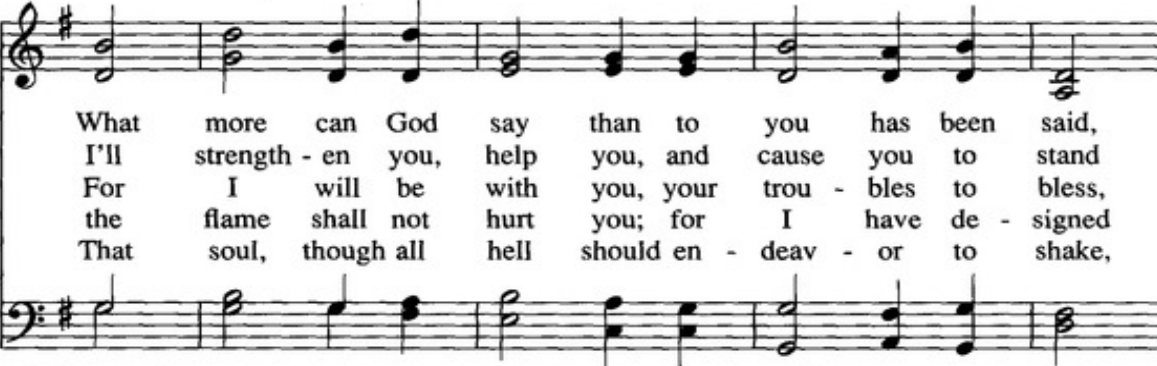
"K" in John Rippon's Selection of Hymns, 1787; alt.




1 How firm a foun - da - tion for you has been laid,
2 "Fear not, I am with you, oh, be not dis - mayed,
3 "When through the deep wa - ters I call you to go,
4 "When through fi - ery tri - als your path - way shall lie,
5 "The soul that on Je - sus has leaned for re - pose,



by God in the Word, in the sac - ri - fice paid!
for I am your God, I will still give you aid;
the riv - ers of woe shall not o - ver you flow;
my grace all - suf - fi - cient shall be your sup - ply;
I will not, I will not de - sert to its foes;



What more can God say than to you has been said,
I'll strength - en you, help you, and cause you to stand
For I will be with you, your trou - bles to bless,
the flame shall not hurt you; for I have de - signed
That soul, though all hell should en - deav - or to shake,



to you, who for ref - uge to Je - sus have fled?
up - held by my gra - cious, om - ni - po - tent hand."
de - liv - er - ing you from your deep - est dis - tress."
your soul to make pure just as gold is re - fined."
I'll nev - er, no nev - er, no nev - er for - sake!"

Invitation To Confession

We have, as the church and as its individual members, been far too silent when the lives of those who we know have been shattered by sexual violence. We have put stumbling blocks in front of those who need to share their stories. We have been quick to ask questions about what they were doing, what they were wearing, why they didn't fight back, and so much more. We ask those questions, placing blame on survivors rather than perpetrators. We ask those questions to create an illusion of safety where these horrible things couldn't happen to us, or to someone we love, because surely we wouldn't have put ourselves in such a vulnerable position. Together let us confess the stumbling blocks of silence we have put between survivors and the good news of God's love.

Unison Prayer Of Confession

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God, we confess that we put stumbling blocks
in the path of those who need to share
their stories of rape or of abuse,
of incest or of cyber-shaming.

We put the block of disbelief,
the block of our own discomfort
at visualizing sexual violence
and our own discomfort
at not knowing how to fix everything.

We put the block of liking church
to be vague and happy,
the block of blaming the victim,
the block of "you should have been careful,
found different kinds of friends,
worn different clothes."

We put the block of insecurity,
the block of "I'm in too deep here –
please tell a therapist,"
the block of "get over it,"
and the block of "aren't you over it yet?"

God, we confess that we are so proud
about not throwing the stones
we never notice that people
stumble and fall
on the way to our church door. Amen.

Assurance Of God's Grace

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Christ who named putting stumbling blocks in the paths of little ones as the most serious of sins, affirmed that giving one cup of cool listening is worth a world of blessing. We are forgiven, and given a chance to listen and love again.

Hymn ~ "I Love To Tell The Story Re-sung For Break The Silence Sunday"

Text by Maren Tirabassi

Tune: I LOVE TO TELL THE
STORY (Fischer), 1869



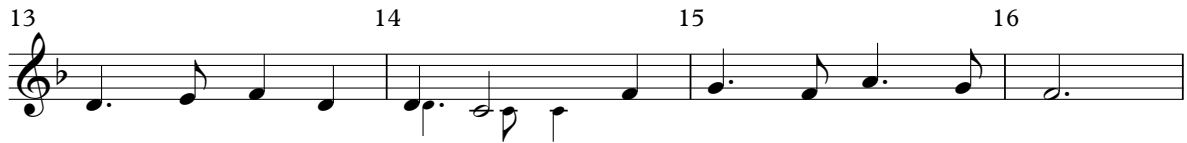
1. We need to tell the sto - ries be - cause we know they're true, of__
 2. We need to tell the sto - ries of minds and bod - ies dis - tressed, for__
 3. We need to host the sto - ries to lis - ten and__ re - ceive, not__



bro - ken hearts and child-hoods, of the lost and those who came through. We
 friends who've kept them hid - den, and hes - i - tant new guests. We
 quick to of - fer "heal - ing," but sim - ply say "I be - lieve." And



need to tell the sto - ries of rape, a - buse, and fear for
 need to tell the sto - ries in muff - led form or bare, for
 when the folks need com - fort that God will dry their tears, the



ev - ery time we name them their pow - er dis - ap - pears.
 si - lence is com - pli - ci - ty but lift - ed voice is prayer.
 gos - pel's "come un - to me..." will e - cho down the years.



We need to tell the sto - ries, dark streets and dorm - i - tor - ies, and
 We need to tell the sto - ries of trust turned pre - da - to - ry, and
 We need to host the sto - ries, un - ho - ly in - ven - to - ry, and



claim the ul - ti - mate sto - ry is that we all are loved.
 claim the ul - ti - mate sto - ry is that we all are loved.
 claim the ul - ti - mate sto - ry is that we all are loved.

Scripture Readings

- Isaiah 43.1-7 God’s promise to name and claim each of us
- Psalm 130 A prayer of trust in God’s presence
- Luke 13.10-17 Jesus heals a woman and encounters resistance

Sermon/Reflection/Stories from Survivors

Sung Response ~ “God Is Holding Your Life” by Richard Bruxvoort Colligan
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God is Holding Your Life

Psalm 121



Lift up your eyes, be-hold the hills. From where will help and res-cue come?
 Turn down your gaze up - on the earth Where is the one who nev-er sleeps?
 Ven - tur - ing out or com-ing home, 'neath heat of day or cool of night,



We call on One who made the earth, Who bless'd the stars, the moon and sun.
 We call on one who guards you now, your spir - it safe in ho - ly_ keep
 We call on one who hears your voice and comes to heal and keep your life



God is hold-ing your life God is hold-ing your life God is hold-ing your life we be - lieve___ God is



hold-ing your life, God is hold-ing your life God is hold-ing your life we be - lieve___

Words and refrain tune by Richard Bruxvoort Colligan. Verse tune: O Waly Waly
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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 own. But some of us, some of your beloved children have been hurt, deep in their souls. They have experienced great violation through rape, abuse, incest, and assault. They come, asking to be heard. They come, asking us to stand with them and work for justice. They come, needing to be healed by your unending love. We pray for that healing this day, O God. We pray for your love and grace to be poured out abundantly on all those who have been hurt by rape and sexual assault – the survivors, and all those that love them. May your healing presence guide each of them in their path towards wholeness, and hope. And may your courageous spirit fill the rest of us this day. Give us the strength to speak out, to be bold, to trust in you. Give us the words we need to comfort those who struggle, and the commitment we need to work tirelessly for the wholeness of all your people. These, and all our prayers, we pray with the words that Jesus taught his first disciples saying together...

The Prayer Jesus Taught

Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name, thy kingdom come, thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread, and forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those who trespass against us. Lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory forever and ever. Amen.

Offering Our Gifts

You might consider designating the morning offering, or a portion of it, to the local sexual violence resource center in your area, or to a national organization such as RAINN (Rape Abuse Incest National Network).

Prayer Of Dedication

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

Celebrating Communion

One: This table is not ours, but it belongs to God. All who seek to be fed and nourished by God's grace, and sustained by this community are welcome to share at this table. We come, from the shadows of a waiting, hurting world, knowing that, wherever we have been, whatever we have experienced, we will be fed and renewed. We reach for the cup of God's love, aware of an unquenchable thirst in the depths of who we are, a thirst for justice and hope. We come, trusting that God will meet us here. Let us pray together...

All: Holy One, we come to share the richness of table. We ask your healing grace to be poured out on all those who have suffered sexual violence. Renew and restore them, and your church. Be present with us, and remind us that your presence is with us always. Give us the courage to truly be the Body of Christ.

One: Gracious God, in Jesus you have given us the greatest gift. We come to this table to know you, to remember your love, and to confess that your grace is for all. Some of us come to this table tired and anxious. Some of us come with hope in our hearts. All of us come, trusting in your Spirit's presence, and trusting in the promise that we might all be One, whole and healthy, as your people. Let us pray together...

All: We thank you God for giving yourself to us in Jesus Christ. We thank you that he lived among us, and knew what it was like to be human. Feed us at this table, and give us the courage to be faithful to the One who dared to come into our world. Renew and revive us. Give us the courage to listen, and to speak out to our sisters and brothers, today and always. Amen.

One: We know the stories about Jesus' life, how he would come to share many meals with his disciples and friends. He would welcome those who had been cast to the margins of society, eating with sinners and prostitutes, with the sick and the lame, with the wealthy and the poor alike. On one of those occasions, as his earthly life was nearing an end, he found himself with his disciples and those who had followed him closely in an upper room in Jerusalem. They were there to share the story of hope, of release from captivity, of God's promise of freedom. During the meal he would take the bread, bless it, break it, and offer it to them saying, "this is my body which is given for you." Later, after supper, he would take the cup, give thanks, and say, "this cup is a reminder for us of the new relationship God has made possible between us, and all of creation."

The bread we share is a reminder for us that just as God blessed Jesus with an earthly body, so our earthly bodies are blessed. The cup we share is a reminder for us of Jesus' life, and the grace of God that Jesus came to help us know. We pray that God would bless this bread, and this cup, and us as we receive them. We bring all our lives to God at this table, that we might be one people, united as the Body of Christ, working together for justice and peace. The gifts of God for the people of God. Come for all things are now ready. Come and see how good God is.

Sharing The Elements

Unison Prayer Of Thanksgiving

We give you thanks, Gracious God, that you come to us in bread and cup, and in the love of this community. Send us from this table, nourished and empowered. Help us listen with all our hearts, and speak with all our minds, that all your people might truly know peace.

Committing Ourselves To Change

One: In the presence of one another, we pledge ourselves to ending the violence of rape and sexual assault, working towards a vision of a healed community where all can live in dignity and peace.

One: We acknowledge the reality of rape and sexual violence, a plague that brings hopelessness and fear to our sisters and brothers.

Many: 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.

One: We know the promise of wholeness, and hope that Jesus came to bring to the world.

Many: 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.

One: We know that we have not done enough, that we have been too silent when those around us have been struggling.

Many: We look forward with hope, trusting in God's ability to give us strength to listen with courage, and to be silent no longer.

One: We believe that the future depends on us.

Many: 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.

One: 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.

All: 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.

Hymn ~ "We Shall Overcome" (tune: We Shall Overcome, public domain)

We shall overcome, we shall overcome,
We shall overcome, some day;
Oh, deep in my heart, I do believe,
We shall overcome, some day.

We'll go hand in hand, we'll go hand in hand,
We'll go hand in hand, some day;
Oh, deep in my heart, I do believe,
We'll go hand in hand, some day.

We are not afraid, we are not afraid,
We are not afraid, today.
Oh, deep in my heart, I do believe,
We are not afraid, today.

The truth shall make us free, the truth shall make us free,
The truth shall make us free, some day;
Oh, deep in my heart, I do believe,
The truth shall make us free, some day.

Benediction & Musical Postlude