



The Uniting Church in Australia
Synod of South Australia

2021 Break The Silence Sunday Worship Guide

16 May 2021 or another suitable Sunday

Acknowledgement of land

We acknowledge the Kaurna people, the traditional custodians of the Adelaide Plains. We acknowledge the wisdom of their Elders both past and present and pay respect to all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders across Australia. We pray that in the power and wisdom of the Holy Spirit we might work together for reconciliation and justice in this land.

Welcome

Welcome to worship. Today we stand with survivors and victims of sexual assault and gender-based violence. 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.

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.

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.

Gathering Song

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. 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 someone, 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, “The ultimate tragedy is not the oppression and cruelty by the bad people, but the silence over that by the good people.”

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: #LetHerSpeak: Australian of the Year 2021 awarded to Grace Tame

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=yzaAye1SKHk> (4:32)

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.

Unison Prayer Of Confession

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 counsellor,"
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.
(Rev Maren C Tirabassi, © 2015, used with permission)

Assurance Of God's Grace

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.
(Rev Maren C Tirabassi, © 2015, used with permission)

Hymn

Bible Reading

Song

Reflection

You may like to watch and/ or read following videos/ articles/ reflection as sermon seeds.

'Evil thrives in silence': Sexual abuse survivor Grace Tame's March 4 Justice speech
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=o4M27q0nBr4>

Grace Tame on Empowering Survivors to Speak Out

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wOQq4HPpHPk>

Australian of the Year Grace Tame's full National Press Club address

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LJmwOTfjn9U>

Grace Tame, sexual assault survivor and advocate, named 2021 Australian of the Year

<https://www.news.com.au/lifestyle/real-life/news-life/letherspeak-grace-tame-wins-2021-australian-of-the-year/news-story/7211e0c41e1dff11ffe9bf273472cb6>

Enough is Enough- a short article on the March4Justice from the UCA Assembly

<https://uniting.church/march4justice/>

#IBelieveHer: hearing the voice of women (Easter Day; John 20) – a UCA minister's biblical and theological reflection on women survivors' testimonies.

<https://johnsquires.com/2021/04/04/ibelieveher-hearing-the-voice-of-women-easter-day-john-20/>

Song

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.

They 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.

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.
These, and all our prayers, we pray
with the words that Jesus taught his first disciples, saying together...
Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name, your kingdom come, your will be done on earth as in heaven.
Give us today our daily bread. Forgive us our sins as we forgive those who sin against us. Save us from the time of trial, and deliver us from evil. For yours is the kingdom, the power, and the glory, forever and ever.
Amen

Song

The offering will be collected during this song. We acknowledge those whose offerings come electronically, and by envelopes, cash and cheques to the office, to further the mission and ministry in and through the church.

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

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

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.

Acknowledgement

It is to be acknowledged that this worship guide has been adapted and modified primarily from the *Break The Silence Sunday Liturgy* written by Rev Moira Finley <https://breakthesilencesunday.org>.

Further resources are available at <https://sa.uca.org.au/justice-advocacy/peace/break-the-silence>



Where to find help

If you or someone you know is experiencing sexual abuse or family violence contact:

- National Sexual Assault, Domestic Violence Counselling Service 24-hour helpline **1800 RESPECT** on **1800 737 732**
- 24-hour Emergency Accommodation helpline on **1800 800 588**
- Safe At Home helpline on **1800 633 937**
- SHE (free and confidential counselling and support) on **6278 9090**
- Sexual Assault Support Services on **6231 1811**, or after hours **6231 1817**
- Family Violence Crisis and Support Service on **1800 608 122**
- Bravehearts – Sexual Assault Support for Children on **1800 BRAVE 1**
Don't go it alone. Please reach out for help by contacting **Lifeline** on **13 11 14**
- Men who have anger, relationship or parenting issues, should contact the **Men's Referral Service** on **1300 766 491** or the **Don't Become That Man** helpline on **1300 243 413**