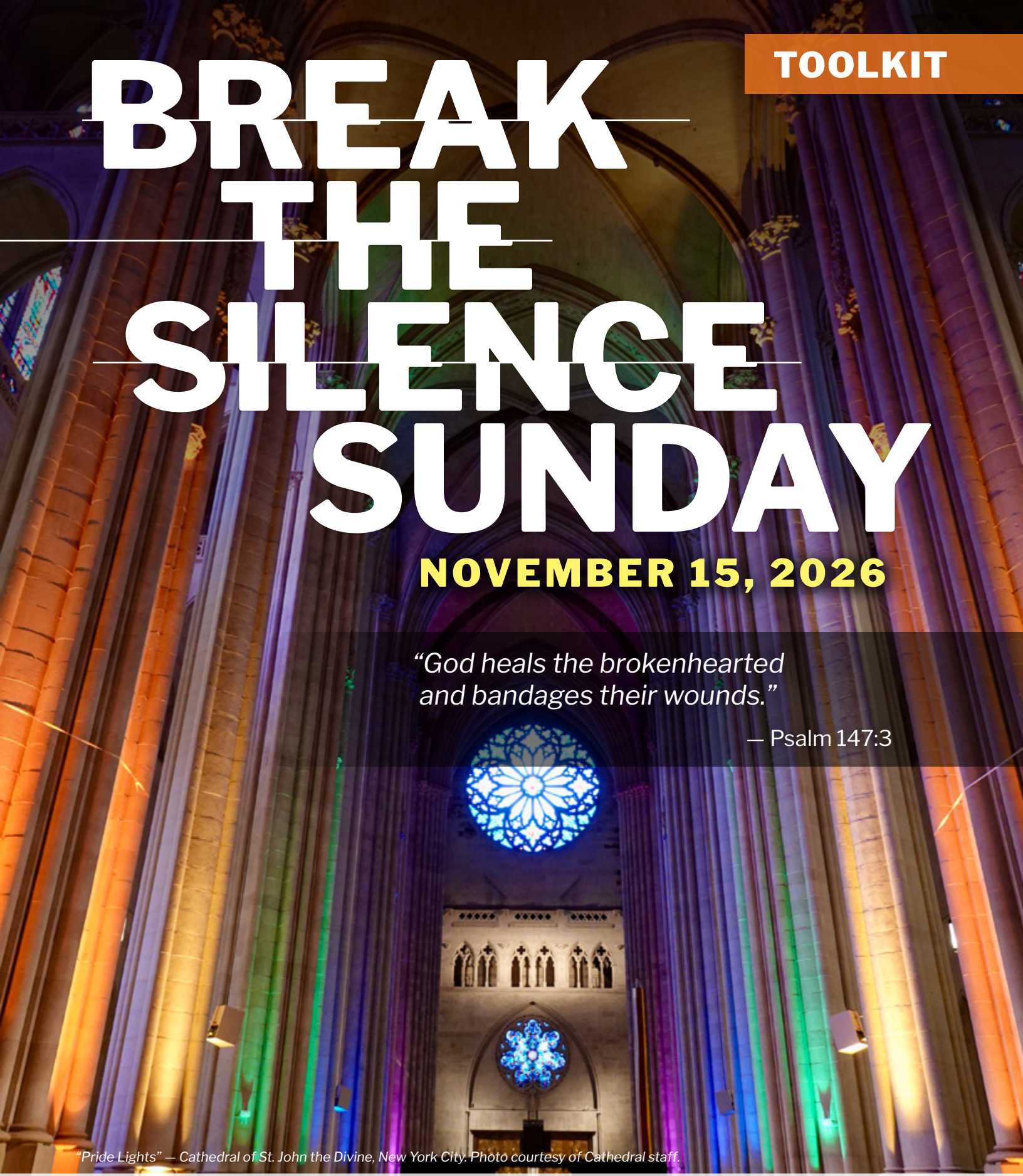
TOOLKIT

BREAK THE SILENCE SUNDAY

NOVEMBER 15, 2026

"God heals the brokenhearted and bandages their wounds."

— Psalm 147:3



"Pride Lights" — Cathedral of St. John the Divine, New York City. Photo courtesy of Cathedral staff.

Prepared by
The Episcopal Diocese of New York Task Force
on Domestic Violence and Sexual Assault

The Episcopal Diocese of NEW YORK

"Healing begins when we listen; transformation begins when we act."

— The Rt. Rev. Matthew F. Heyd, Bishop of New York

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THE BISHOP OF NEW YORK

Beloved in Christ,

Every person deserves to live free from violence and fear. Every home should be a place of safety, and every congregation should be a sanctuary where those who have experienced abuse are met with compassion, dignity, and hope.

On November 15, 2026, the Episcopal Diocese of New York will observe Break the Silence Sunday, reaffirming our commitment to confront domestic violence, sexual violence, gender-based violence, and other forms of abuse. This year, our observance takes on renewed significance as we join churches throughout the Anglican Communion in strengthening our common witness.

In 2022, the 80th General Convention of The Episcopal Church adopted Resolution 2022-C064, designating the Sunday closest to November 25, the International Day for the Elimination of Violence against Women, as Break the Silence Sunday.

Building on this commitment, the 19th meeting of the Anglican Consultative Council (ACC-19), held in Belfast earlier this year, adopted Resolution 11, Addressing Violence and Abuse. The resolution affirms our Christian responsibility to uphold human dignity and challenge cultures of silence, stigma, and impunity. It encourages every Member Church of the Anglican Communion to consider designating an annual Break the Silence Sunday, or a similar observance appropriate to its context, and invites churches to share resources and good practices.

In response to this Communion-wide initiative, our Diocese will observe Break the Silence Sunday on November 15, the penultimate Sunday in Ordinary Time, immediately preceding Christ the King Sunday. This change provides a consistent place in our liturgical calendar for focused prayer, preaching, education, and pastoral response, without conflicting with Christ the King Sunday or Advent.

At our Diocesan Convention on November 14, Resolution 5 will be presented for consideration, proposing that the penultimate Sunday in Ordinary Time become the established annual date for this observance.

Our faith calls us beyond acknowledging suffering to confronting the attitudes and practices that allow abuse to persist. We must listen without judgment, support survivors, hold perpetrators accountable, and ensure that our congregations embody the safety and compassion we proclaim.

I am deeply grateful to our diocesan Task Force on Domestic Violence and Sexual Assault for its steadfast leadership and for preparing this annual toolkit. Its liturgical, educational, and pastoral resources serve congregations within our Diocese and beyond, reflecting the spirit of collaboration encouraged by ACC-19.

As we observe Break the Silence Sunday, may we renew our commitment to transforming cultures of violence into communities of justice, healing, and hope.

Healing begins when we listen; transformation begins when we act.

Grace and Peace,

+Matthew

The Rt. Rev. Matthew F. Heyd
Bishop of New York

WORSHIP RESOURCES

The Episcopal Diocese of New York Task Force on Domestic Violence and Sexual Assault presents these resources to help congregations and other ministry settings observe Break the Silence Sunday throughout The Episcopal Church.

SERMON PREPARATION

Prepared for the Episcopal Diocese of New York for Break the Silence Sunday by The Rev. Bill Baker, White Plains, New York.

TALKING POINTS FOR BREAK THE SILENCE SUNDAY

Proper 28—Year A, November 15, 2026

Domestic violence affects millions of people each year, cutting across every demographic, including age, race, gender, and socioeconomic status. According to the National Coalition Against Domestic Violence, 1 in 4 women and 1 in 9 men in the United States experience severe intimate partner violence during their lifetimes. This means that in every congregation in our diocese, including yours, there are people who have endured, or are enduring, this abuse, suffering in silence.

It is the sincere hope of The Domestic Violence Task Force of the Episcopal Diocese of New York that through preaching and teaching we will break the silence about the sin of intimate partner abuse and begin to free those who are suffering. We encourage every preacher to consider adding something to their sermon this week in order to raise awareness in our congregations.

1. VICTIMS HIDING THEIR TALENTS OUT OF FEAR

Whether we read The Gospel (Matthew 25:14-30) as literally about money or figuratively about our gifts, we must understand that victims of intimate partner abuse might fear a harsh master and try to hide their talents. What is sometimes forgotten is why someone might hide their talents.

Imagine living in a home where having money could be perceived as a threat because it might give you the power to leave, or where developing your talents could be seen as a threat by an abusive partner who wants to control every aspect of your life. The fear of violence is so real that victims feel that they must bury their talent instead of facing an abusive partner.

The Church, however, must invest both its money and its gifts to ensure that all people are safe and there are enough shelters to help those fleeing, enough supportive services to begin the healing process, and enough people speaking up against the sin of intimate partner violence. If we believe in Jesus as a liberator of all people, protecting victims experiencing abuse and supporting them as they find safety, healing, and a path forward must be our goal.

2. WAKE UP AND LOOK OUT FOR ONE ANOTHER (THESSALONIANS 5:1-11)

The MeToo Movement reminded us that we need to listen to women and believe them. Abuse thrives when others look away or refuse to acknowledge a victim's pain. Being awake means paying attention. We can learn to recognize controlling behavior, threats, isolation, humiliation, and other warning signs. We must stop treating abuse as merely a private disagreement between two people.

Each person must realize that encouragement is more than kind words. Paul calls the community in Thessalonica to build one another up. Today, that means believing people who disclose abuse, supporting their decisions, helping them access services, and not abandoning them when their situation is complicated. Then we, as Christians, must stand with them and speak out against intimate partner violence.

As a Church we are responsible for one another. We may not be able to solve another person's personal situation, but we can help ensure they do not face it alone. Paul offers a strong call to action. In order to offer people faith, love and hope, all people must work together to break the silence on domestic violence.

3. INTIMATE PARTNER VIOLENCE COMES IN MANY FORMS

When I worked in the field of Domestic Violence for 7 years, I learned that abuse comes in many forms. Physical violence is horrible and demoralizing, but so are verbal abuse, financial control, sexual abuse, isolation, and intimidation. Long after the bruises are gone the sting of words lingered.

Being told no one wants you or that you are fat, ugly or stupid can be crippling long after victims finally leave. The emotional and psychological effects can last for years. PTSD, anxiety, and sleepless nights are among the challenges many survivors face. And we must understand that abuse is not always visible. Sometimes the person sitting next to us in church, smiling and greeting everyone, is carrying a tremendous amount of pain that no one else can see.

4. THE CHURCH'S CALL TO WAKE UP

It is not enough to tell individuals, "Wake up." The whole Church, the whole society, must awaken. We must awaken to the truth that domestic violence is not a private issue—it is a community crisis that demands our moral and spiritual response.

Our Baptismal Covenant asks, "Will you strive for justice and peace among all people, and respect the dignity of every human being?" Each time we answer, "I will, with God's help," we are pledging to stand with survivors, to listen, to believe them, and to help create a world where no one must live in fear within their own home.

5. ACTION STEPS FOR CLERGY AND CONGREGATIONS

- Speak openly about domestic violence in sermons, prayers, and conversations.
- Provide visible resources about local shelters, hotlines, and counseling services.
- Ensure confidentiality and safety for anyone disclosing abuse.
- Train clergy, lay leaders, and staff to recognize signs of abuse and respond with compassion and knowledge.
- Pray for survivors and for the transformation of hearts that perpetuate violence.

A EUCHARIST OF HEALING, HOPE AND LIBERATION

A liturgy prepared for the Episcopal Diocese of New York for the 16 Days of Activism/Break the Silence Sunday by The Rev. Dr. Carrie Pemberton Ford (Equalrites.com), 27th October 2024, Tuscany, Italy.

THE IONIAN CREED

ALL: **We believe in God above us, maker and sustainer of all life, of sun and moon, of water and earth, of humanity, male and female.**

We believe in God beside us, Jesus Christ, the word made flesh, born of a woman, servant of the poor, tortured and nailed to a tree. A man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief, he died abandoned and forsaken. Mary, alone remained beside him, her heart pierced through with the sword of a mother's grief. He descended into the earth to the place of death. On the third day he rose from the tomb. He ascended into heaven, to be everywhere present throughout all ages, and His kingdom will come on earth.

We believe in God within us, the Holy Spirit burning with Pentecostal fire, life-giving breath of the Church, Spirit of healing and forgiveness, source of all resurrection and of eternal life. Amen.1

THE PEACE

PRIEST The risen Christ came to his disciples, hidden in the upper room, and said to them, 'Peace be with you.' The Peace Christ brings is unlike any other. He told his disciples 'Do not think that I have come to bring peace to the earth. I have not come to bring peace, but a sword'. This peace, the peace of justice, making right that which is broken, restoration for those who have been wronged, of announcing truth between us, of healing and the profound price paid for forgiveness of sins – this is the peace Christ brings to us today.

Peace be with you - let us greet one another in the name of the risen Lord.

1 Iona Abbey Worship Book (2001) with an addition by EqualRites. The Iona Community is based off the coast of Scotland, though members also live elsewhere. It is an International Ecumenical Christian movement, working for justice and peace, rebuilding of community and the renewal of worship, with members all over the world - Members, Associate members and Friends. The island of Iona is where it all started. https://iona.org.uk/

THE RECEPTION OF THE GIFTS

PRIEST Every creature in heaven and on earth and under the earth and in the sea, and all that is in them, cries out "To the One who sits on the throne and to the Lamb be praise and honour and glory and power forever and ever!"

ALL **For all that is in heaven and in earth is Yours; Yours is the kingdom, O LORD, and we acknowledge you as head over all.**[2]

PREFACE

PRIEST Lift up your hearts

ALL **Though we have been bruised, and can bruise,**
We lift them to the tender healing of your grace,

PRIEST Let us give thanks unto the Lord

ALL **We give thanks to our creator, redeemer, and sustainer**

PRIEST For you are our creator, our Heavenly Mother and Father,
who brought your son into our world for our redemption.
Our brother, our true guide.
He lived your generous love,
your kindness,
your justice
and gave true judgment
on our wounded natures.
He held to account
those who wounded others
in thought, words and deeds.
He healed those who sought him,
in body, mind and spirit.
He taught his followers
to love generously,
work steadily,

2 I Chronicles 29:11, Revelation 5:13 6

forgive prodigally.
To build space
here on earth
fit for heaven.
Spaces where all are safe
as beloved children
of one Heavenly
Amma, Abba.

ALL **Your love invites us all**
We are your children,
And heirs of this kin-dom.

PRIEST And so with the Holy Angels
gathered around God's throne
together with Mary our Holy Theotokos
who answered God's invitation
to bear the Christ,
nurtured
in her own body,
and accompanied to his death
even death on an Imperial cross
We share with her a Magnificat of praise.

ALL **Magnificat anima mea**
Magnificat Dominum

PRIEST God looks on each one of us in our lowly estate

ALL **God raises the humble in heart**
displaces the haughty and arrogant
and overturn all systems of injustice and coercion.

PRIEST God our liberator
You throw down rulers from their thrones.

ALL **Display your awesome power through those you call,**
to fill those who hunger, with good things.
Provide those in distress, with succour
and liberate all those who are oppressed.

PRIEST As we sing the song of the whole of creation
assisted by Cherubim and Seraphim

ALL **Holy, Holy, Holy**
Eternal One whose glory fills the Heavens,
the whole earth lives because of your life- giving breath
Hosanna in the Highest

Blessed is the one who comes in the name of the Lord
Our Passover from violation into peace
Our liberator from coercion into true freedom
Hosanna in the Highest.

PRAYER OF HUMBLE ACCESS

ALL **Most merciful Lord,**
your love compels us to respond,
Our hands unclean,
our hearts unprepared; we felt unfit
to eat even the crumbs fallen from your table.
But you are Eternal Love, our pain bearer, our life giver.
You are the God who is our salvation
You open the door for life, safety and full restoration.
You shared your bread with sinners.
Those declared as unworthy by others
You invited to feast with you in paradise.
You call us to come, be with you and be fed.
So free us, heal us, feed us.
For you see us completely.
And in your sight we become whole.

PRIEST The precious body and blood of the incarnate God, was surrendered,
so that this complete work of reconciliation be finished.
May Christ's spirit live in each of us, heal us, and release us into joy-filled union;
that we, with the whole company of those who follow the one,
whose body was broken, but now being healed,
may sit together as one, and feast in your kingdom.

ALL **Amen**

Or

Loving God,
we are homeless
and we turn to you
We are helpless
we come to you
we are hungry
and in pain
and we return to you
Called by love we come
Stand by us,
comfort each one here
feed our hunger,
tend our pain
hear our cry
and welcome us home[3]
Amen

PRAYER OF CONSECRATION

PRIEST Eternal one, God of Justice and Peace
who asks us to be the voice of the voiceless
and to be a people who heal each other
in the name of the true word
Jesus, who came and gave his life
for each one of us, for the whole of broken humanity.
The whole of creation awaits
restoration and the revelation of
the kingdom of God, come on earth.
We offer these signs of your goodness
this bread and this wine,
offered out of the earth's bounty

3 Based on Kate McIlhagga, 'Prayer of Approach' in Hannah Ward and Jennifer Wild (eds), Human Rites: Worship Resources for an Age of Change (London: Mowbray, 1995).

and the labour of lives.
We remember the supper of institution
of this most holy of feasts
given for our strengthening
for our journey
following in the footsteps
of Jesus, our brother,
Jesus, our saviour, protector and friend

Who on the very night that he would be betrayed,
called his friends around him.
Mary, Martha, and those who prepared the Passover meal,
James, John, Peter, those sent out
as sheep amongst wolves
to preach, teach and heal in his name.
At supper he took up signs of your creation
Gifts of bread and of wine.
he raised unleavened bread
and gave you thanks.
He tore it, as the curtain between
the sacred and profane would be torn
at his death

He gave it to his friends saying
take, eat, this is my body
surrendered,
the Passover lamb
for the sins of the whole world
do this as often as you eat it
in remembrance of me.
In the same way after supper
Jesus took the cup of blessing,
and gave thanks to God
He offered it to all his disciples assembled
around him and said
'This is my blood, the blood of the new covenant
poured out for the many,
for the forgiveness of sins.
Drink this, each of you
in remembrance of me.

ALL Is this not the cup of blessing, Is this not Berekah,
and Hallel – the cup of praise
LORD, not to us,
but to your name be the glory,
because of your love and faithfulness.

PRIEST And so we pray

THE LORD'S PRAYER

ALL 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 have absorbed from one another, free us.
In times of temptation and test, strengthen us.
From trials too great to endure, spare us.
From the grip of all that is evil, deliver us.
For the mystery of forgiveness is your divine gift to all
where you reign in the glory of the power that is love, now and for ever.[4]
Amen

THE INVITATION

PRIEST Come to the table for all is prepared
Come and eat, bread for the long journey
Take Wine, for remembrance and refreshment.
Christ calls you to come
to receive the power of divine love

4 Originally from New Zealand Prayer book, adapted by Jim Cotter from Prayer at Night; permission to use from Hymns Ancient & Modern

to be healed deep within, to be changed and change the world
with those he calls, who hear his voice,
however faint you are called by name, beloved so come.

PRAYER FOR ADMINISTRATION

PRIEST A body broken, alongside the broken, so all may be healed
The body of Christ keep you (in the safe keeping) of eternal life

PRIEST Christ's life surrendered: our salvation, drink courage, and healing.
The blood of Christ keep you (in the safe keeping) of eternal life

COMMUNION

THANKSGIVING PRAYER

ALL God of seed and growth and harvest,
Creator of all that grows and all that sustains,
Thank you for feeding us with our Soul food,
an abundance of your grace, to sustain us
for the tasks we face.

Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ,
Thank you for being the bread of life,
we need never be hungry,
Our refreshment,
as we seek for peace and justice in the world.
Guiding and Empowering Spirit,
give us strength to walk in his steps
and remember deep within our hearts,
that you are our life today and every day;
Holy God; Holy One; Holy Three
Amen[5]

5 https://godspace.wordpress.com/tag/celtic-prayers/ Pastor David Hodson - July 13, 2013 adapted by EqualRites.com 2024

BLESSING

PRIEST Go in peace in the encircling protection of the Triune God
Creator, Mother, Father,
Redeemer, Empowerer, Friend
Sustainer, Advocate and Breath of God

ALL **AMEN**

DISMISSAL

PRIEST This Holy Feast is ended, we go to fulfill our work in the world.
Singing songs of celebration and thanksgiving as we go.

ALL **AMEN**

FINAL HYMN

COLLECTS

O God of peace and promise, you call forth prophets in every age to offer visions of your in-breaking reign and to press those who harm others to change their hearts and ways: Pour your Spirit mightily upon us, that we, in our day, may boldly condemn all violence against women and girls, and effectively work for the safety, dignity and healing of all peoples; in Jesus' name, Amen.

by The Rev. Canon K. Jeanne Person

Gracious God, like a mother hen you shelter us under your wings: Bring your truth and love into homes where domestic violence has shattered the peace. Provide sustenance for the victims and accountability for the abusers. Send wise and courageous friends who can offer alternatives, and bring your healing power into broken relationships. May your church provide a haven of safety and peace for the abused and reach out to support all who serve the needs of the abused in our communities; Through Jesus Christ, our Lord. Amen.
From Breaking the Silence: The Church responds to Domestic Violence

by Anne O. Weatherholt (Morehouse Publishing: 2008)

O God, by your Holy Spirit you anointed Jesus Christ to open the eyes of the blind and give voice to those who are silent: Inspire us, by the power of that same Spirit, to see and recognize gender violence in its myriad forms, and to speak boldly and work effectively for its eradication, that, in your reign at hand, all women and men, and girls and boys, may blossom abundantly and rejoice to see your glory; in Jesus' name, Amen.

by The Rev. Canon K. Jeanne Person

BENEDICTION

FOR THE 16 DAYS OF ACTION AGAINST VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN AND GIRLS

May the loving arms of Eternal Love, our creator God who called all things into being, to live together in truth, kindness and harmony, embrace each one. AMEN

May the healing touch of the risen Christ, whose body, mind and spirit endured the violence of men, public shame, and betrayal of those he trusted, heal the trauma we carry. Replenish our faith, to live life, inspired by these 16 days and all they have taught us, to seek justice and recovery for all those wounded by violence in home, workplace or in ruptured communities. AMEN

May the Ruach spirit of God, breathe into our lives the courage of Judith, the tenderness of Mary, and the wisdom of Sophia, so that we too may overturn the tables of violence, and abuse wherever and however it manifests. That all may enjoy the peaceable world where men are called to be helpmeets to women, and the lion lie down with lambs.

So may the prayers of St Brigid
be about your hearth and your kine,
about your horses and your goats,
about your sheep, about your lambs.
protect you from the clutches of all
that is malign.

Keep you from the teeth of hounds
and each other's horns
from the vultures of the high moors
and ravaging beasts of the wild hills.
Keep you from wolf,
ravaging dog,
from fox, and bear,
from 'Luath' of the Fiann
and the violence of man.

May the company of St Brigid,
guard you each day and night,
In heat and cold,
Each early and late,
in darkness and light
in the strong circling of the Trinity.

The Rev. Dr. Carrie Pemberton Ford © Fordwords 2025

The St Brigid Blessing, inspired by "St Brigid's Charm for the Stock (the Household)" from *Carmina Gadelica: Hymns and Incantations* (Floris Books, 1994).

St Brigid
St Brigid is a leading saint in Ireland, who founded a joint monastery for men and women in Kildare, Ireland, 'the church of the Oak Tree' which educated hundreds of women to become ministers of the Christian faith, in healing, midwifery, championing social justice and the rights of women to bodily integrity in St Brigid's day. Her feast day February 1st, is now a public holiday in Ireland, following lobbying of the Irish Senate after the outrages of the 'Mother and Baby scandals' in Ireland where an estimated 56,000 unmarried mothers and 57,000 babies endured, and many babies along with some mothers, lost their lives, their infants and still-born children buried in unmarked graves, in Tuam 796 infants and children were discovered buried in a decommissioned sewage system. The scandalous treatment and loss of life, which has ricocheted across Ireland and wherever Irish communities have settled, was effected by the Irish State in collusion with the Roman Catholic church, as a Patriarchal response to 'dealing with the shame of pregnancy outside of wedlock' through inadequately resourced Catholic institutions with their own cohorts of compromised religious sisters, across the late nineteenth century and into the twentieth century as late as the 1970s. St Brigid's day now recalls this appalling State /Church colluded Violence against Women, inspiring fresh attention to the multiple cultural, religious and political premises which can underpin VAW in our communities. St Brigid shares a name with a Celtic goddess of fire, and numerous Holy Wells in Ireland are attributed to her ministry of healing, miracle working and championing of women's full health, safety and empowerment.

The Luath of the Fiann
Luath in Irish and Gaelic mythology referred to a hound of the great hero Cu Chulainn — written about in Robert Burns — *The Two Dogs*.

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

LAMPS IN THE DARKNESS: REFLECTIONS & PRAYERS FOR ALL THE DAYS OF OUR LIVES

https://www.worldcitizensnetwork.org/resources/Lamps_in_the_Darkness_Booklet.pdf

Created by the International Anglican Women's Network, this collection offers prayers and reflections inspired by UN International Days and Christian holy days, highlighting women's experiences of war, conflict, injustice, and resilience through faith, hope, and solidarity.

PRAYER RESOURCE FROM THE MOTHERS' UNION

www.mothersunionpeterborough.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/10/Mothers-Union-16-Days-Prayers.pdf

This resource from the Mothers' Union has a range of reflections and prayer templates for use for the 16 Days and domestic abuse in general.

16 DAYS OF ACTIVISM 2026 – EPISCOPAL RELIEF & DEVELOPMENT

https://www.episcopalrelief.org/resources/16-days-of-activism-toolkit/

This is a faith and community-based toolkit from Episcopal Relief and Development. "This resource is designed to inspire faith-based action and foster deep reflection on ending violence against women and girls (VAWG)—a critical issue that affects millions of lives globally."

BREAK THE SILENCE SUNDAY – HOUSE OF SARAH, FIJI

https://content.app-sources.com/s/424499955064248261/uploads/PDF_Files/BREAK-THE-SILENCE-Booklet-2021-21st-Nov_1-8441497.pdf

This is a liturgical resource prepared by the House of Sarah, Diocese of Fiji for their commemoration of Break the Silence Sunday. Our thanks to The Rev. Sereima Lomaloma, founder of House of Sarah, for teaching us to break the silence.

ABOUT THE TASK FORCE

CO-CHAIRS:



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The Domestic Violence Task Force of the Episcopal Diocese of New York began its work in fall 2013 and, in early 2019, became the Domestic Violence and Sexual Assault Task Force. Our mission is to elevate the urgency of addressing gender-based violence across diocesan parishes—including domestic violence and sexual assault—and to equip clergy and lay leaders to serve as informed first responders when someone seeks help. Our vision is that every congregation becomes a safe haven where survivors can find support, safety, and a path toward healing.

We build awareness through presentations, trainings, and the distribution of resources such as laminated restroom signs for every parish. We have hosted webinars each April for Sexual Assault Awareness Month, each October for Domestic Violence Awareness Month, and during the 16 Days of Activism against Gender-Based Violence (late November–December). Presenters from across the United States and around the world share expertise with our diocese and the wider community. Links to most of our past webinars are available here.

We are pivoting to podcasts and are planning a series aimed at equipping clergy with the understanding and skills—practical, pastoral, and theological—to address this epidemic, as studies show that 1 in 3 people in the pews have been afflicted by intimate partner violence/domestic violence. Intervention and prevention strategies will be discussed, and resources shared.

In observance of the 2026 16 Days of Activism against Gender-Based Violence, the Task Force is organizing an international webinar in collaboration with the Diocese of London and its three link partners: the Episcopal Diocese of New York, the Evangelical Church in Berlin-Brandenburg, and the Anglican Church of Mozambique and Angola. Entitled "Breaking the Silence: What Does Justice Look Like? An International Faith-Based Conversation on Gender-Based Violence, Survivor Protection and Accountability," the webinar draws upon UN Women's 2026 theme, "Ensure Justice, Protect Survivors, End Impunity." Panelists representing different countries and faith perspectives will explore what justice means for victims and survivors, the barriers they face in seeking protection and redress, and the responsibilities of religious institutions in challenging silence, supporting survivors, and ensuring accountability. The prerecorded webinar will premiere during the 16 Days of Activism against Gender-Based Violence which runs from November 25th (the International Day for the Elimination of Violence against Women to December 10 (Human Rights Day).

We are pleased to maintain a relationship with NYC's Commission on Gender Equity and the Mayor's Office to End Gender-Based Violence. Members of the Task Force serve on the planning committee of Denim Day New York City. The Rev. Canon Alissa Newton was a featured speaker at this year's Denim Day program in Manhattan. It was empowering for women to see and hear from a senior level woman clergyperson.

The Task Force maintains a rich library of resources on the diocesan website. For more information, please contact the Co-Chairs: the Rev Paul Feuerstein at pbfeuerstein@gmail.com and Dr. Victoria Jeanne Rollins at rollins.revdrvictoria@gmail.com.

Special thanks to Bethann Carbone and Michael Heil of Branding Ovation for their ongoing partnership and strategic support of the Episcopal Diocese of New York Task Force on Domestic Violence and Sexual Assault.



APPENDIX

22 | ACC-19 RESOLUTION 11: ADDRESSING VIOLENCE AND ABUSE

23 | RESOLUTION 2022-C064: DESIGNATE THE OBSERVANCE OF “BREAK THE SILENCE SUNDAY”

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ACC-19 RESOLUTION 11:
ADDRESSING VIOLENCE AND ABUSE

The Anglican Consultative Council:

1. gives thanks for the work of Member Churches, dioceses, parishes, networks, and ecumenical partners in addressing domestic violence, sexual violence, gender-based violence, and other forms of abuse through advocacy, education, pastoral care, and safeguarding ministries;
2. affirms the Christian call to uphold the dignity of every human being and to challenge cultures of silence, stigma, and impunity that enable violence and abuse;
3. encourages each Member Church of the Anglican Communion to consider designating an annual “Break the Silence Sunday”, or a similar observance appropriate to its context, to promote prayer, preaching, education, survivor support, and public witness concerning domestic violence, sexual violence, gender-based violence, and abuse; and
4. invites Member Churches, dioceses, and parishes to share resources and good practices through the Anglican Communion so that the Church may strengthen its common witness to safety, justice, healing, and hope.

RESOLUTION 2022-C064:
DESIGNATE THE OBSERVANCE OF "BREAK THE SILENCE SUNDAY"

FINAL TEXT

Resolved, That the 80th General Convention of The Episcopal Church designate as Break The Silence Sunday the Sunday closest to November 25, which is the International Day for the Elimination of Violence against Women; and be it further

Resolved, That the common objective is to halt the epidemic of violence against women and to affirm as Christians that violence has no place within our families, our Church, and our communities; and be it further

Resolved, That The Episcopal Church encourage the education of its clergy and laity on how to support survivors of rape and sexual violence, including trauma-informed care, and advocate on behalf of those not yet ready to speak openly so that the voices of survivors do not speak alone; and be it further

Resolved, That we add our voices and prayers with those around the world seeking the elimination of gender-based violence.

Source: General Convention, *Journal of the General Convention of The Episcopal Church*, Baltimore, 2022, p. 859.

MEMORIAL: BREAK THE SILENCE SUNDAY

Proposed by: Yvonne O'Neal
Source: Memorial M010 to the 81st General Convention, Louisville 2024

To the Deputies and Bishops of The Episcopal Church assembled at the 81st General Convention:

As members of The Episcopal Church, we are called to live out the Gospel in ways that heal, support, and uplift the vulnerable among us.

Resolution 2022-C064, which designated Break The Silence Sunday, is an essential step in addressing and mitigating the profound impacts of sexual assault and domestic violence within our communities and beyond. Break The Silence Sunday provides a vital opportunity for our Church to bring issues of sexual violence to the forefront of our congregational dialogue. By dedicating one Sunday each year to this cause, we affirm our commitment to being a sanctuary for healing and a force against the injustices of abuse.

Break the Silence Sunday is the first Sunday during the 16 Days of Activism against Gender-Based Violence (November 25, International Day for the Elimination of Violence against Women to December 10, International Human Rights Day). In 2024, the first Sunday of the 16 Days is December 1.

By observing Break The Silence Sunday, we join with other people of faith around the world to take action to end the incessant violence against women and girls.

We observe Break The Silence Sunday so that "violence shall no longer be heard in our land." Isaiah 60:18

Break The Silence Sunday is an effort to begin a dialogue within the church about domestic and gender-based violence and sexual assault. Within the context of our faith communities, we hope to:

- **Educate our communities** about the realities and impacts of domestic and gender-based violence and sexual assault, incorporating theological reflection and scriptural context to guide understanding and response.
- **Support survivors** by acknowledging their experiences, offering pastoral care, and connecting them with professional resources for recovery.
- **Advocate for justice** by raising awareness, challenging societal norms that perpetuate violence, and encouraging legislative action that protects and empowers survivors.
- **Commit ourselves** to the work of changing the world, creating a future where gender-based violence, such as rape and domestic violence is a memory.

Break The Silence Sunday began at the Diocese of Polynesia, in the Anglican Church in Aotearoa, New Zealand and Polynesia with a Diocesan Synod resolution in 2013, "That within the Diocese of Polynesia there be zero tolerance on violence against women and children within our homes, our schools, our communities and the church." In this part of God's vineyard, the people have witnessed the transformative power of the observance of Break The Silence Sunday in fostering deeper compassion, greater awareness, and proactive advocacy within the Church.

We must realize we live in a culture of sexual violence, and we need a comprehensive set of solutions within our institutions and communities to address it. This culture of sexual violence, colloquially known as "rape culture," refers to a complex set of beliefs that encourage male aggression, sex and sexual violence against women and supports this violence against women largely by normalizing it. It's a culture where violence is seen as sexy and where sex is seen as violent. This culture normalizes sexual violence as a fact of life and teaches us that sexual violence is inevitable.

In looking at the root causes of this behavior, we need to look at our Biblical texts and how we mishandle the prevalence of rape and sexual culture in the Bible. There are many instances of rape in scripture, of improper assertions of power: the story of Sodom and Gomorrah; Hagar being used by Abraham and Sarah; the rape of Tamar by her brother; the rape of the concubine in Judges; stories of women as spoils of war. We don't talk about these passages enough, often because we're scared of talking about sex in church and because we simply don't know how to make sense of them. This is part of why Break The Silence Sunday is needed.

The Episcopal Church already believes in the importance of ending the epidemic of sexual violence worldwide. Indeed, The World Council of Churches Decade of Churches in Solidarity with Women (1988-1998) heard stories of rape as a weapon of war, gender injustice, abuse, violence, and many tragedies; it created the global campaign of Thursdays in Black– wear black on Thursdays and wear a button towards a world without rape and violence – a campaign of awareness, advocacy, and solidarity. The Episcopal Church signed on to this global campaign with Resolution 2022-C063.

We urge this 81st General Convention to:

- Reaffirm the Church's commitment to observing Break The Silence Sunday annually.
- Encourage continued theological education and training on how to effectively support survivors in our midst.
- Preach against rape, misogyny and sexual violence.
- Strengthen our resolve to be communities of refuge and healing, standing in solidarity with those seeking justice and peace.

The Diocese of New York Task Force on Domestic Violence and Sexual Assault produced a toolkit for the observance of Break The Silence Sunday on November 26, 2023. Episcopal News Service wrote an article about the toolkit, encouraging observance throughout The Episcopal Church.

In the Diocese of New York Task Force on Domestic Violence and Sexual Assault webinar, Breaking Silence: Exploring the Complexities of Sexual Assault at the Intersection of Race, Caste, Class, and Ethnicity, Dr. Brittney Cooper gives a powerful message on addressing sexual assault, not only in our communities, but in our churches; it is a message that needs to be heard. We invite you to listen to the webinar found on the Vimeo channel of the Diocese of New York (https://vimeo.com/933708474).

Here are some statistics from the National Sexual Violence Resource Center:

- 1 in 5 women in the United States experienced completed or attempted rape during their lifetime.
- Nationwide, 81% of women reported experiencing some form of sexual harassment and/or assault in their lifetime.

- 1 in 3 female victims of completed or attempted rape experienced it for the first time between the ages of 11 and 17.
- It is estimated that 734,630 people were raped (including threatened, attempted, or completed rape) in the U.S. in 2018.
- 40% of rapes and sexual assaults were reported to police in 2017, but only about 25% were reported to police in 2018.
- The prevalence of false reporting for sexual assault crimes is low — between 2 percent and 10%.
- Almost 1 in 4 undergraduate women experienced sexual assault or misconduct at 33 of the nation's major universities.
- About half (51.1%) of female victims of rape reported being raped by an intimate partner and 40.8% by an acquaintance.
- The estimated lifetime cost of rape is $122,461 per victim.

And here are statistics from RAINN (Rape, Abuse & Incest National Network)

- Every 68 seconds a person in the United States is sexually assaulted.
- 1 out of every 6 American women has been the victim of an attempted or completed rape in her lifetime (14.8% completed, 2.8% attempted).
- From 2009–2013, Child Protective Services agencies substantiated, or found strong evidence to indicate that, 63,000 children a year were victims of sexual abuse.
- A majority of child victims are 12–17. Of victims under the age of 18, 34% of victims of sexual assault and rape are under age 12, and 66% of victims of sexual assault and rape are age 12–17.
- 9 out of 10 victims of rape are female.
- The majority of sexual assaults occur at or near the victim's home.
- 48% of victims were sleeping or performing another activity at home when the crime occurred.
- 29% were traveling to and from work or school, or traveling to shop or run errands
- 12% were working

- 7% were attending school
- 5% were doing an unknown or other activity

Additionally, for more statistics, please see the Fact Sheet from the National Network to End Domestic Violence.

We live in a rape culture fueled by the belief that sexual violence is a fact of life. By breaking the silence, we can change the narrative and change the behavior. Let us continue to embrace the call to break the silence so that no voice is marginalized, and no story goes unheard. In doing so, we reflect the love and justice of Christ, making our Church a beacon of hope in a world in need.

Respectfully submitted,
Yvonne O'Neal
Lay Deputy, Diocese of New York

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The Diocese of New York Task Force on Domestic Violence and Sexual Assault

ADDITIONAL DOMESTIC VIOLENCE AND SEXUAL ASSAULT RESOURCES

FUTURES WITHOUT VIOLENCE
www.futureswithoutviolence.org

NATIONAL DOMESTIC VIOLENCE HOTLINE
www.thehotline.org

NATIONAL NETWORK TO END DOMESTIC VIOLENCE
www.nnedv.org

RAINN
www.rainn.org

VAWNET
www.vawnet.org

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