

# BREAK THE SILENCE SUNDAY

DECEMBER 1, 2024

A TOOLKIT FROM  
THE EPISCOPAL DIOCESE OF NEW YORK  
TASK FORCE ON DOMESTIC VIOLENCE AND  
SEXUAL ASSAULT



**"VIOLENCE SHALL NO LONGER BE HEARD IN OUR LAND"**  
**ISAIAH 60:18**



"IF THERE IS ONE MESSAGE THAT ECHOES FORTH FROM THIS CONFERENCE, LET IT BE THAT HUMAN RIGHTS ARE WOMEN'S RIGHTS AND WOMEN'S RIGHTS ARE HUMAN RIGHTS, ONCE AND FOR ALL."

FIRST LADY HILLARY CLINTON AT THE FOURTH WORLD CONFERENCE ON WOMEN IN BEIJING, CHINA (1995)

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THE BISHOP OF NEW YORK

*Beloved,*

We want everyone in our congregation and our communities to be safe.

As we approach the second commemoration of Break the Silence Sunday in the Diocese of New York, we do so with a commitment renewed and strengthened by General Convention Resolution 2022-C064.

This resolution calls upon us to name and address the reality of gender-based violence within our communities and to support survivors through prayer, advocacy, and tangible action. In embracing this call, we respond to Jesus' invitation to bring healing and justice where there is pain and oppression.

I commend the Task Force on Domestic Violence and Sexual Assault for producing this toolkit with liturgical resources for the observance of Break the Silence Sunday and the First Sunday in Advent on December 1st in our congregations. It includes a *Eucharist of Healing, Hope and Liberation*, written especially for the Diocese of New York, and I authorize its use. Also included are tips for sermon preparation.

Break the Silence Sunday provides a sacred space for us to confront the pain caused by gender-based violence. As a Church, we are called to lift the veil of silence, shame, and isolation that has often surrounded survivors, to honor their voices, and to stand alongside them in solidarity and compassion. Through this initiative, we recognize that healing and reconciliation begin when we listen deeply, respond compassionately, and act with courage.

I am deeply grateful for your commitment to this sacred work. Together, may we be instruments of God's justice and love, breaking the silence and bearing witness to the renewal of the Church for the healing of the world.

Grace and Peace,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Matthew Heyd".

The Rt. Rev. Matthew Heyd  
Bishop of New York

# MEMORIAL: BREAK THE SILENCE SUNDAY

Proposed by Yvonne O'Neal

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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Endorsed by:

Dr. Martha Bedell Alexander  
Mr. Joe McDaniel  
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The Right Reverend Sean Rowe  
The Very Reverend Kara Wagner Sherer  
The Right Reverend Allen K. Shin  
The Right Reverend Robert Wright  
The Diocese of New York Task Force on Domestic Violence  
and Sexual Assault

# WORSHIP RESOURCES

To help the congregations and other ministry settings of the Episcopal Diocese of New York observe Break the Silence Sunday, the Task Force on Domestic Violence and Sexual Assault offers the following worship resources: a liturgy written especially for the Diocese, links, and prayers drawn from across the Anglican Communion. Also included are talking points for sermon preparation.

## A EUCHARIST OF HEALING, HOPE AND LIBERATION.

A liturgy prepared for the Episcopal Diocese of New York resource pack for the 16 days addressing Violence against Women and Girls. (Equalrites.com) by Revd Dr Carrie Pemberton Ford, 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

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

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

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

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**

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.**

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.**

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**

**All: 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

**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.**

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**

[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).

## Prayer of Consecration

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  
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**

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

## 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  
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

## Sing during the communion

### Thanksgiving prayer

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]



## Blessing

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

**AMEN**

## Dismissal

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

**AMEN**

## Final Hymn of something suitable

### Prayer Resource from the Mothers' Union

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. You should find appropriate prayers for use on Break The Silence Sunday.

### Prayers to End VAW

This resource from the Liturgy Commission of the Anglican Church in Australia. It contains litanies and prayers for ending violence against women. Also included is a list of suggested Bible readings.

### **A Collect**

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

### **A Collect**

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)

### **A Collect**

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

## Prayers for Healing

Come to the Lord for He is the source of all Goodness and Wellbeing.

Come to the Lord because He is Love.

Bring your fears, your anger, your disappointments, your despair, and your doubts,

For our Lord is the source of all Healing.

Pour out your hearts to Him for He cares deeply and unceasingly about each and every one of us. Come to the Lord as you are, for He will bring you Life anew.

Bring your shattered dreams and memories to the Lord as our Shepherd and He will bring New Life and Hope to you as ever precious and so loved,

Become that self of your destiny created in the Image of G-d, still shining despite all violations and wounds.

Come to the Lord as the Source of Strength and Transformation to re-member and re -name all we truly are, cherished and held in Your Promise of wholeness to claim life in abundance!

Give us your Wisdom to dissolve the guilt and blame we never deserved.

Set us free from the hurts and shame as You walk beside us to speak our truth to power and to conduct our lives in healing justice-making, accountability and Love to create a New World and New Order in Your Holy Name. Amen.

by Dr. Victoria Jeanne Rollins

Dear God,

We come into your presence and thank you for each moment and breath you have given us.

We thank you for families where we can be nurtured and loved.

We are conscious that many people have their joy and security robbed because they experience abuse and violence from people who should be providing security and support.

We especially pray for women who are facing abuse and its dreadful consequences.

Be with each one and restore hope, we pray.

We thank you for all who are making every effort to save your daughters.

Give them strength and wisdom to deal with trauma and to transform lives.

Help them to keep going even when their hearts are troubled.

As we seek to be more aware of this issue, bless our efforts.

Help us to put faith into action through love as this is what your Word teaches us.

We ask this all in your Precious and Mighty Name, Jesus.

Amen

by Amal Sarah, Pakistan

## Sermon Preparation Talking Points for Break the Silence Sunday (December 1 - Advent 1)

Domestic violence affects millions of people each year, cutting across all demographics, including age, race, 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 in their lifetimes. This means that in every congregation, including ours, there are likely individuals who have endured or are enduring this suffering in silence.

Theologian Marie Fortune, a leader in addressing domestic violence in faith communities, reminds us, “There is no justification in Scripture for abuse, domination, or violence against another person. Instead, Scripture calls us to treat one another with love, compassion, and justice.” Her words challenge us to confront any misinterpretations of our faith that could be used to rationalize abuse, and instead, to align ourselves with God’s vision for human dignity and protection.

### **Advent Hope Amid the Reality of Domestic Violence**

- Today, on the first Sunday of Advent, our readings call us to look forward to God’s promise of hope and justice. But unlike the distant future hope described in the Scriptures, domestic violence is a current and urgent crisis in our midst. Many people in our congregations either experience this reality or know someone who does. Our calling today is to bring that hope into the here and now by acknowledging and addressing the suffering among us.

### **Domestic Violence and the Dynamics of Power and Control**

- Domestic violence is rooted in power and control, with abusers seeking to dominate, isolate, and silence their victims. As clergy, we have a responsibility to name this reality and stand against it. Breaking the silence is a critical first step in challenging the grip of abuse. We are called to offer sanctuary and support to those affected, providing a church community that counters isolation with love and safety.

### **Advent Readiness: Standing Up for Justice**

- In Luke 21, Jesus calls us to stand up and lift our heads in a time of turmoil, reminding us that God’s redemption is near. Our Advent readiness is a call to vigilance, to “break the silence” around domestic violence and stand up for justice within our communities. We can prepare the way for Christ by creating a church that embodies compassion and support, making room for hope and healing.

### **Action Steps for Clergy and Congregations**

- Speak openly about domestic violence, both in sermons and prayers.
- Provide resources about local shelters, counseling, and support services, ensuring these are accessible to everyone in the congregation.
- Create safe spaces where victims can speak confidentially with clergy or church leaders.
- Train clergy and church staff to recognize signs of abuse and respond with compassion and knowledge.

# RESOLUTIONS

## Passed at the 246th Diocesan Convention, November 2022

Proposer(s) of the Resolution	Yvonne O'Neal and Paul Feuerstein
Parish or Organization(s)	Diocesan Task Force on Domestic Violence and Sexual Assault
Contact	(347) 776-8010; yvonne.oneal@gmail.com
Title of the Resolution	Observing Break the Silence Sunday

### Text of the Resolution

[13] Resolved, that the 246th Convention of The Episcopal Diocese of New York affirm General Convention Resolution 2022-C064, Break the Silence Sunday, and calls on churches to observe the Sunday closest to November 25, which is the International Day for the Elimination of Violence against Women; and be it further,

[14] Resolved, that within The Episcopal Diocese of New York there be zero tolerance on violence against women and children within our homes, our schools, our communities and the church.

### Explanation

Churches throughout Anglican Communion, including The Episcopal Church, take part in the 16 Days Campaign against gender-based violence, which runs annually from November 25 (International Day for the Elimination of Violence against Women) to December 10 (International Human Rights Day). The 16 Days period includes other significant dates, like International Human Rights Defenders Day (November 29), World Aids Day (December 1), and the anniversary of the Montreal Massacre (December 6). We think it appropriate to celebrate Break The Silence Sunday during this period.

Break The Silence Sunday is a resource for churches to actively support survivors of sexual violence, particularly in the context of worship. The goal is three-fold:

- to help congregations learn about the reality and scope of the problem of sexual violence;
- to establish congregations as communities where survivors can share their stories and be received with hope and love; and
- to provide congregations with ways to advocate for change in their communities and around the world.



Picture credit: UN Women

### **General Convention**

<b>Resolution Number:</b>	<b>2022-C064</b>
<b>Title:</b>	<b>Designate the Observance of "Break the Silence Sunday"</b>
<b>Legislative Action Taken:</b>	<b>Concurred</b>

### **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.

**Citation:** General Convention, Journal of the General Convention of...The Episcopal Church, Baltimore, 2022 (New York: General Convention, 2023), p. 859.



# ABOUT THE TASK FORCE



**REV. PAUL  
FEUERSTEIN**



**DR. VICTORIA  
JEANNE ROLLINS**



**CHRISTINA DHANUJA**



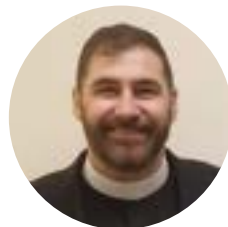
**YVONNE O'NEAL**



**CRAIG RIJKAARD**



**ELOISE THOMAS**



**REV. WILLIAM (BILL)  
BAKER**



**JUDITH DOUGLAS**

The Domestic Violence Task of the Episcopal Diocese of New York started its work in the fall of 2013. The name changed to the Domestic Violence and Sexual Assault Task Force in early 2019. The mission is to raise the importance of addressing gender violence in the parishes of our diocese, whether domestic violence or sexual assault and equip clergy and lay leadership to be first responders if a victim asks for help. Our vision is that all congregations will become safe havens for individuals who have been victimized, where victims can receive the support they need to escape violence and begin their healing journey.

The Task Force raises the consciousness of the diocese's clergy and laity through presentations, training, and the distribution of laminated signs to be posted in the bathrooms of every parish in the diocese. Also, the Task Force organizes webinars in April for Sexual Assault Awareness Month, October for Domestic Violence Awareness Month, and November/December during the 16 Days of Activism against Gender-Based Violence. Presenters from other parts of the U.S. and other countries have joined us to offer their expertise to the diocese and the wider community.

On December 5, 2024, we are pleased to present the webinar ***Breaking Silence: Changing the Culture of Rape and Sexual Assault***. The Rev. Dr. **Danielle Tumminio Hansen**, Associate Professor of Practical Theology and Spiritual Care, Candler School of Theology, Emory University, and the author of five books, including *Speaking of Rape: The Limits of Language in Sexual Violations*, will lead a conversation. Joining her are **Dr. Linda Martín Alcoff**, Professor of Philosophy at the City University of New York and the author of several books, including *Rape and Resistance*, Mr. **Ted Bunch**, Chief Development Officer at A Call to Men and co-author of *The Book of Dares* and Ms. **Amanda Clelland**, Director of Communications & Advocacy, Thistle Farms.

Our events are featured in the calendar of events of NYC's Commission on Gender Equity and the Mayor's Office to End Gender-Based Violence. As the only faith-based organization listed on the calendar, we are mentioned in the Commission on Gender Equity's annual report. As a valued partner of the City, the Task Force was invited to participate in planning New York City Denim Day, events organized in the five boroughs to promote awareness around the issue of sexual assault.

The Task Force has a treasure trove of informational resources on the [Diocesan website](#). For further information, contact the Episcopal Diocesan Mission Office at 212-316-7484, or the Co-Chairs, the Rev. Paul Feuerstein, at [pbfeuerstein@gmail.com](mailto:pbfeuerstein@gmail.com) and Dr. Victoria Jeanne Rollins at [domagetouslemonde@yahoo.com](mailto:domagetouslemonde@yahoo.com).



Picture credit: Sam Kong. Love banner at Church of Our Savior