

Transcript 4/25/2021 "From Silence to Action"

00:07

[Music]

00:20

will i lose my dignity

00:30

[Music]

00:42

from

00:48

till i lose my dignity

01:10

is is

01:41

[Music]

01:49

[Music]

02:03

[Music]

02:30

[Music]

02:33

good morning and welcome to the

02:35

unitarian universalist church of utica

02:38

i'm katie a member of the board here at

02:41

uu utica

02:42

and a member of its inclusion team

02:45

this past friday marks the annual day of

02:48

silence

02:49

the day of silence is an annual

02:51

student-led demonstration where lgbtq

02:54

students and allies

02:55

all around the country and the world

02:58

protest the harmful effects of bullying

03:00

harassment and discrimination of lgbtq

03:04

people in schools in the united states

03:07

this protest takes the form of a

03:08

day-long vow of silence

03:10

to symbolically represent the silencing

03:13

of lgbtq students

03:16

in honor of the day of silence we're

03:18

going to do our usual welcome a little

03:20

differently

03:21

today first we'll have the words on the

03:24

screen with no sound

03:26

giving folks a chance to read silently

03:29

then i'll read the words

03:30

out loud as we usually do as you read

03:34

and then listen

03:36

think about how different the feeling is

03:38

between the two versions

03:39

when we welcome each other in silence
03:42
and when we welcome each other with
03:43
spoken words
03:45
also while silence and breaking silence
03:48
is a theme of today's service
03:51
please understand that we don't mean
03:52
silence
03:54
as a lack of physical voice only
03:58
people speak not only with their
03:59
physical voice but also their hands
04:02
and their written words as circumstances
04:04
allow and require
04:06
today then we are focusing on the
04:09
silencing of the lgbtq community
04:12
particularly its use by systemic
04:15
oppression
04:16
when their metaphorical voices have been
04:18
taken away or denied
04:20
we focus on those who have chosen to
04:22
alter alter or
04:23

silence the way they interact with the
04:25
world in order to bring attention
04:28
to the systemic silencing of others
04:31
here are the words of welcome with which
04:32
we begin every worship service
04:34
and remember this first part has no
04:37
audio your speakers are not broken
05:20
whether you are visiting for the first
05:22
time or have been a member for many
05:24
years
05:25
you are welcome here whatever faiths you
05:28
have known
05:29
if any you are welcome here whoever you
05:33
are
05:33
and whomever you love you are welcome
05:36
here we are invited to bring our whole
05:39
selves to this worship service
05:42
our doubts as well as our convictions
05:45
the pain and joy we have known our
05:48
longing for connection and understanding
05:50

every part of you is welcome here
05:54
if you are signing in today for the
05:56
first time we are glad you have joined
05:58
us
05:58
and we would love to learn more about
06:00
you and connect you with our newsletter
06:02
if you like
06:03
there is a link in the chat to a form
06:05
that we hope any visitors would fill out
06:07
and we hope you will stay for informal
06:09
conversation and breakout groups after
06:11
the service
06:14
we do have one announcement today
06:17
stewardship has an announcement that
06:18
they will give towards the end of the
06:20
service
06:22
let us open our hearts and minds to the
06:25
experience of community
06:26
and wisdom of love our call to worship
06:31
our words by the reverend dr kristen
06:34

I harper titled the breath of life
06:37
is not mine alone i do not wish to
06:41
breathe
06:42
another breath if it is not shared with
06:45
others
06:46
the breath of life is not mine alone
06:49
i brought myself to be with you hoping
06:52
that by inhaling the compassion
06:55
the courage the hope found here
06:59
i can exhale the fear the selfishness
07:02
the separateness i keep so close to my
07:05
skin
07:07
i cannot live another moment at least
07:10
not one of joy
07:11
unless you and i find our oneness
07:14
somewhere among each other somewhere
07:17
between the noise
07:19
somewhere within the silence of the next
07:22
breath
07:26
hello darkness my old friend
07:30

i've come to talk with you again

07:35

because a vision softly creeping

07:40

left its seats while i was sleeping

07:45

and the vision that was planted

07:49

in my brain still remains

07:55

within the sun of silence

08:02

in restless streams i walked along

08:06

narrow streets of cobblestone

08:09

[Music]

08:11

neath the halo of a streetlamp

08:16

i turned my collar to the cold and damp

08:21

when my eyes were stabbed by the flesh

08:25

of any

08:26

on light that split the night

08:31

and touch the sound of

08:36

silence and

08:38

in the naked light i saw

08:42

ten thousand people maybe more

08:46

[Music]

08:47

people talking without speaking

08:52

people hearing without listening
08:57
people writing songs
09:01
that voices never shared
09:05
no one dared
09:09
disturb the sound
09:12
of silence
09:15
fool said i you do not know
09:20
silence like a cancer grows
09:25
hear my words that i might teach you
09:29
take my arms and i might reach you
09:33
[Music]
09:34
but my words like silent
09:38
raindrops fell
09:41
[Music]
09:44
and echoed in the
09:49
of wells
09:52
and the people bowed and prayed
09:57
to the neon god they'd made
10:02
and the sign flashed out its warning
10:07
in the words that it was for me
10:11

and the sign said the words of the
10:14
prophets are
10:16
written on the subway walls
10:20
and tenement halls and
10:24
whispered in the sounds
10:27
of silence
10:35
my name is brenda and i'm a member of
10:37
the uu utica inclusion team
10:40
today's chalice lighting is called
10:41
living with pride by laurie gorgas-laban
10:45
we light our chalice flame for those who
10:47
lived their lives in closets of shame
10:50
for those who furtively visited the bars
10:53
where nobody knew your name
10:55
for the stonewall riot and the fierce
10:57
trans women who fought
10:59
for the plague which still takes far too
11:01
many too young
11:03
too soon so many gone so many never
11:07
lived to see
11:09

out gay kids singing on tv out gay
11:12
people serving in the military
11:15
marriage equality families formed by
11:18
intention
11:19
we light our chalice flame for all of
11:21
these for all are siblings of the
11:23
rainbow
11:24
surviving living life out in the open
11:28
with pride hi everyone welcome to
11:31
together time
11:32
our story today is about how you can
11:35
raise your voice to help inspire others
11:38
it's called love is powerful by heather
11:41
dean brewer
11:42
and illustrated by lewin pham
11:49
mari spilled her crayons onto the table
11:52
they made a messy rainbow
11:54
what are we coloring mama she asked mama
11:57
smiled
11:58
a message for the world
12:02

mari ran to the window and pressed her

12:05

nose to the glass

12:06

far below people walked in different

12:08

directions

12:10

buses cars and taxis honked and grumbled

12:13

down the busy street mari asked

12:17

how will the whole world hear they'll

12:20

hear

12:20

mama said because love is powerful

12:27

mari climbed onto her mama's lap the

12:30

crayons smelled sharp

12:31

and new mama used one to write some

12:34

letters

12:35

even though mama's words stretched

12:36

across the poster

12:38

they would be too small for the world to

12:40

read mari thought

12:46

mari picked up a crayon as she made her

12:49

own sign she imagined her friends in

12:51

their apartments across the city

12:53

grandma and grandpa a plane ride away
12:55
and all the people
12:57
in other countries
13:01
mari wondered how will the whole world
13:03
see our message
13:05
mama hugged her close they'll see she
13:08
said
13:09
because love is powerful
13:16
mama handed her a coat and then they
13:19
both laced up
13:20
their shoes mari tucked the posters
13:22
under one arm and held mama's hands with
13:24
the other
13:26
they slipped through the elevator doors
13:28
down
13:29
down down they went all the way
13:32
to the lobby
13:38
mari hopped onto the sidewalk then
13:40
stopped and looked up
13:42
the street was packed with people more
13:45

people than she'd ever seen in her
13:47
entire life
13:48
mari tugged on mama's arm to ask her to
13:51
kneel down
13:52
then she whispered in mama's ear mama
13:55
it's so loud and there's so many people
13:59
they won't hear our message mama said
14:03
they will little mari
14:06
mama lifted mari up and for a moment she
14:10
felt like she was flying
14:12
on top of mama's shoulders mari could
14:14
see the crowd swell
14:16
for blocks hundreds and thousands
14:19
even hundreds of thousands of people
14:22
marching down the street
14:28
some held signs like mari's all saying
14:31
different things
14:33
everyone cheered as they walked together
14:36
mama joined them
14:37
mari bobbed above the crowd like a
14:39

canary fluttering over trees

14:42

she felt as tall as one of the buildings

14:48

mari raised her sign for everyone to see

14:51

even though she was small and the crowd

14:53

was very big

14:55

so big she didn't think anyone would

14:57

hear

14:58

she called out her message

15:04

through the roar her voice was heard

15:07

and someone shouted the message back

15:10

mari yelled again and more joined in

15:14

again she yelled the message

15:22

this time when the crowd called back

15:24

mari's message rumbled down the street

15:27

and echoed off the buildings it was as

15:30

loud

15:31

as breaking waves

15:36

love is powerful

15:42

and that is the end of the story now

15:44

this is based on a true story

15:47

and here's a picture of the real life

15:49

mari

15:51

and there's a note from her too which

15:53

i'll read quickly

15:54

it says i was only six years old but i

15:57

knew why we were there

15:59

our new president had said some terrible

16:01

things about women

16:02

he made people feel scared and angry we

16:05

went to the women's march along with

16:07

hundreds of thousands of people

16:09

that cold day to show that love really

16:11

is powerful

16:13

a few of my friends were there with me

16:15

with their parents

16:16

we rode the subway from harlem to

16:18

midtown together

16:19

after spending time making our signs i

16:22

made two

16:23

love is powerful and be kind

16:28

when we joined the crowd at the march i
16:30
couldn't see that well and was tired of
16:32
walking
16:33
my mom lifted me up onto her shoulders
16:35
as we marched down the crowded streets
16:38
when i sat on my mom's shoulders i felt
16:40
proud holding the signs i had made
16:42
earlier that day
16:44
when i called out love is powerful to my
16:47
surprise the people close to me repeated
16:49
it back
16:50
each time i said it more people joined
16:53
in
16:54
soon hundreds of people were echoing my
16:57
chant
16:57
of love is powerful at that moment i
17:00
really felt its power
17:02
one voice can be heard and one voice
17:06
can make a difference my advice to you
17:09
is believe in yourself be confident
17:12

and don't be afraid to speak up
17:16
and remember to speak up not just for
17:18
yourself
17:19
but for other people too love
17:22
mari there she is again
17:26
your signs so that
17:29
was love is powerful by heather dean
17:33
brewer
17:34
and that's all we've got for today so
17:36
remember to use your voice
17:38
to help yourself to help other people
17:40
and to be an advocate
17:42
until next time bye the author of our
17:45
story
17:46
heather gene brewer wants everyone to
17:48
know
17:49
that your voice matters it has power
17:52
it can change the world we can change
17:56
the world
17:57
and while changing the world it takes
17:59

love and compassion

18:01

and action it also takes resources

18:05

resources come in many forms including

18:07

the time and talents

18:09

of the members of our church and i'd

18:11

especially like to hold up today the

18:12

time and talents of our inclusion

18:14

team who put this fantastic service

18:16

together

18:17

however we also need your treasures if

18:20

you can give them

18:22

to help us fund our work if you can give

18:25

please feel free to donate using the

18:28

link in the chat

18:29

and or send a check directly to the

18:32

church

18:33

thank you for supporting the work of

18:36

this church

18:37

with your time talent treasures and any

18:39

gifts

18:40

that you can give good

18:43

morning everyone my name is dylan

18:45

thompson

18:46

my pronouns are z zimzier or they them

18:49

theirs

18:51

as was mentioned earlier the day of

18:53

silence is a day when

18:55

lgbtq students and allies remain silent

18:59

to point out the harm that we deal with

19:02

i'm going to tell you a little bit of my

19:04

story

19:05

um as an lgbtq person

19:08

i'm a little older than most students

19:11

but i'm also a student at uc

19:13

um utica college so

19:16

when i was 20 i came out

19:19

as bisexual um i was in the military at

19:23

the time and my now

19:25

ex-husband asked me to have a threesome

19:28

with one of my coworkers that was

19:33

the first
19:37
aggression microaggression that i
19:41
experienced
19:42
as an lgbtq
19:46
person um
19:49
when i was 34 i came out as trans
19:52
non-binary going back and forth asking
19:56
if i was
19:57
non-binary or trans man because
20:01
i hadn't known about
20:04
either of those because there was no
20:06
references
20:09
but i had known all my life i wasn't a
20:10
girl
20:15
since then i've dealt with micro
20:18
aggressions
20:19
almost every day except for during
20:23
a lot of the quarantine because you know
20:26
being stuck at home with your family
20:28
you're okay
20:29

but these include dead naming which
20:32
means using the dead the name that i was
20:34
given at birth
20:35
and misgendering which is when they
20:37
refer to me as a girl
20:39
or she her um
20:43
i've been told i i've also been told
20:46
i bring too much drama for correcting
20:48
people who misgender me
20:54
in in fact it has impacted
20:58
prospects for work study
21:02
as well as um
21:06
some of my education at utica college
21:09
which is something that i'm working on
21:11
um it's
21:13
i'm also one of two trans voices out of
21:16
the entire student body
21:19
that the administration turns to for
21:24
questions about
21:27
transgender issues
21:32

so that that basically falls on two

21:34

people and i am one of them

21:37

um there was a quote that was in

21:41

the video

21:45

or one of the videos earlier from

21:48

kristen back

21:49

who is the first openly

21:52

transgender former navy seal

21:56

i feel kind of a connection because i'm

21:59

also a

22:00

transgender veteran she says i don't

22:03

want you to love me

22:05

i don't want you to like me but i don't

22:08

want you to beat me up and kill me you

22:11

don't have to like me

22:12

i don't care but please don't

22:15

kill me

22:20

this week

22:23

we didn't do so much on

22:26

friday um

22:29

a day of silence but instead we had a

22:32

spirit week

22:33

to try and have our voices out there

22:37

but we did have a day that addressed the

22:40

silent harm

22:45

for the first day of spirit work we had

22:47

karaoke

22:48

which is karaoke that features

22:52

a queer members of the utica college

22:56

community on saturday

23:00

instagram posts about our favorite queer

23:02

media

23:04

self-care sunday then monday we had our

23:08

silent harmony

23:10

which was our event that was

23:14

it was an opportunity for utica college

23:16

community to be

23:17

silent while those of us who were harmed

23:20

by transphobic microaggressions

23:23

like those i talked about before

23:26

tuesday we talked about

23:30

queer history

23:33

wednesday was wednesday talking about

23:36

our winds

23:37

and then we had our drag show these were

23:40

how our

23:40

we honored we we honored the day of

23:43

silence

23:44

by speaking out so loudly

23:51

now after the day of silence

23:56

we open up the floor by

23:59

sharing stories to remind people about

24:01

ways to help

24:04

firstly we ask people to remember that

24:08

lgbtq people are in constant battle

24:11

to be recognized intersex people are

24:15

still regularly exposed to genital

24:17

mutilation

24:18

at birth to make them conform to the

24:21

gender binary

24:23

27 states have no lgbtq plus
24:27
non-discrimination protections
24:33
and that's from
24:35
freedomforallamericans.org
24:38
what
24:42
we need to speak to political agents
24:45
about expanding
24:46
rights because there are attacks all
24:49
over the country
24:50
both politically arkansas having passed
24:54
legislation
24:55
denying health care for transgender
24:58
youth
24:59
and mississippi passing laws prohibiting
25:02
transgender people
25:03
from participating in sports
25:08
on the rise in attacks
25:11
on transgender people 44
25:14
violent deaths in 2020 making it the
25:17
most
25:19

deadly year for transgender people
25:23
in a long time 15
25:27
have already died in 2021
25:31
due to violent attacks
25:35
i'm going to close this with one
25:38
close my portion with
25:42
one quote by jason collins
25:47
openness may not completely disarm
25:49
prejudice
25:51
but it's a good place to start
25:59
thank you dylan we appreciate you
26:00
joining us today and we are looking
26:02
forward to having
26:03
uh more community outreach with the
26:06
utica
26:07
college gay straight alliance club and
26:10
its members
26:12
my name is jules um i use they them
26:14
pronouns and
26:16
i am a member of this church and its
26:18

inclusion team

26:21

hearing these kinds of stories like

26:23

dalen's from friends in our community

26:25

can be hard

26:26

it seems like the fight for justice has

26:28

been going on for so long

26:30

from the civil rights activism and lgbt

26:33

activism of the 1960s

26:35

and the 1970s and the 1980s

26:39

it's hard um feeling like we are still

26:42

having

26:43

the same conversations still fighting

26:45

the same injustices

26:47

as our parents and our parents parents

26:48

before us

26:51

and the news seems to jump right from a

26:53

new hate crime to yet another

26:55

trans bashing bill somewhere in the

26:56

country even on those rare days when

26:59

things seem to be going right

27:01

like when the house of representatives
27:02
passed the equality act there's no
27:04
good way to relax because the fight so
27:07
clearly
27:08
isn't over yet and until it is
27:11
until we can truly let go let down our
27:14
guard and our defense
27:15
we have to help each other find what
27:17
respite we can
27:20
there's a concept in group singing which
27:22
you may be familiar with called stagger
27:25
breathing
27:26
where during periods of long extended
27:28
singing
27:29
individuals in the choir will drop out
27:31
to take breaths
27:32
at different times from one another so
27:35
that the notes can be sustained
27:36
uninterrupted we cover for each other
27:39
making sure each has their chance to
27:41

breathe and to rest
27:43
so that the group as a whole can
27:45
continue on
27:47
that's what the day of silence is it's a
27:49
time for us to take a breath a time for
27:51
our allies to stand by us
27:53
and with us in solidarity a time when we
27:56
can bring attention to those in our
27:57
community who continue to be victims
28:00
of violence and bigotry
28:03
and so we take inspiration today from
28:05
students like dylan and other student
28:07
activists
28:08
at utica college who remind us that
28:10
there is a time for silence and
28:12
solidarity
28:13
and a time for breaking silence for
28:15
moving into action
28:17
we make space on the day of silence for
28:19
quiet
28:21

for listening for breathing in and

28:24

holding space and love

28:25

for those who need it but

28:28

at some point we have to breathe out we

28:31

have to move into the next day

28:33

and the next and the next what will we

28:36

do tomorrow

28:39

will we return to our own lives as

28:41

though the fight is over

28:43

many of us can't afford to will we

28:46

stay silent unsure of how to move

28:49

forward

28:51

or will we use this breath that we've

28:54

just taken

28:54

to energize our next steps will we ask

28:58

questions when we have them will we use

29:01

our voices to help cover

29:02

for our comrades so that they have a

29:04

chance to breathe as well

29:06

and we can all move forward together

29:10

remember that the day of silence only
29:12
has impact if it stands in stark
29:14
contrast
29:15
to how we act the rest of the year
29:18
let us use our silence intentionally as
29:21
a time to listen
29:22
time to heal time to introspect but
29:26
let our silence not become neutrality
29:29
not become complicity
29:31
and let us not be silent a day longer
29:33
than necessary
29:35
the work is not done and it requires us
29:37
to speak out
29:42
our next musical piece is you will be
29:45
found
29:46
from musical dear evan hansen
29:59
have you ever felt like nobody
30:03
was there
30:06
have you ever felt forgotten in the
30:09
middle of nowhere
30:12

have you ever felt like you could

30:15

disappear

30:17

like you could fall no one would hear

30:22

[Music]

30:29

so let that lonely feeling

30:33

wash away

30:36

maybe there's a reason to believe you'll

30:40

be okay

30:42

cause when you don't feel strong enough

30:45

to stand you can't

30:49

[Music]

31:16

you will be found so that the sun comes

31:34

[Music]

31:40

you will be found

31:45

[Music]

31:52

you will be found

32:03

[Music]

32:06

even when the dog comes crashing through

32:09

when you need a friend to

32:13

and carry your broken on the ground

32:16

you will be found come straight again

32:28

you will be found

32:40

you will be found

32:46

you will be found

32:59

and next i would like to share a call to

33:02

action

33:04

we hold space today for silence for

33:06

those who have been

33:07

silenced by oppression and hate for

33:10

those whose bodies and lives are

33:12

endangered by hateful legislation

33:14

and systemic injustice we hold space for

33:18

internal reflection

33:20

for hope for love we hold space today

33:23

for action

33:24

for allyship for speaking out and

33:27

speaking up and speaking with

33:28

but never louder than those we support

33:32

we hold space for the student activists

33:34

in schools across the world

33:36

for protesters who refuse to back down

33:38

in the face of physical danger

33:40

and who continue to lead us into a

33:42

better more just

33:44

future as we emerge from this sacred and

33:47

thoughtful space

33:49

we encourage all to find your own spaces

33:51

for action

33:53

here are three suggestions acr health is

33:57

a local organization

33:59

who just kicked off their 23rd annual

34:01

hike for life wellness summit

34:03

the hike for life is a 23 day series of

34:06

wellness sessions that align with acr

34:08

health's programming

34:09

and enable people to refocus on their

34:11

own health

34:13

there's a link for that in the chat the

34:16

trevor project

34:17

is the leading national organization

34:20

providing crisis intervention and
34:21
suicide prevention
34:22
services to lesbian gay bisexual
34:25
transgender
34:26
queer and questioning young people under
34:29
25.
34:30
there's a link for that in the chat as
34:32
well and
34:34
the inclusion team of uu utica who put
34:36
to put together today's service with the
34:38
help of dylan bennett
34:40
supports the church's mission and growth
34:42
through active inclusion
34:44
education and advocacy for the lgbtq
34:47
plus issues in the congregation and
34:49
wider community
34:51
if you have questions or want to get
34:52
involved please contact
34:54
jules heller jules's email will be in
34:57
the chat as well
34:58

thank you for joining us today please

35:01

join us in extinguishing our chalice

35:03

speaking the words on the screen

35:17

we extinguish this flame but not the

35:19

light of truth

35:21

the warmth of community or the fire of

35:24

commitment

35:26

these we carry in our hearts until we

35:28

meet again

35:39

in our benediction this is a poem i

35:41

wrote called community

35:44

tear down the fence tear down the walls

35:48

unlock the gates open the doors let

35:51

everybody in open your heart

35:54

let love in listen to your neighbor

35:58

let truth in open your eyes look for

36:01

appreciation for others

36:03

use your hands give to those in need

36:06

walk arm and arm together

36:08

create beloved community

36:16

through the corridors of sleep past
36:19
shadows dark and deep
36:21
my mind dances and leaps in confusion
36:26
i don't know what is real i can't touch
36:30
what i feel and i hide behind the shield
36:33
of my
36:34
illusion so
36:39
i'll continue to continue
36:42
to pretend my life will never end
36:50
and flowers
36:56
[Music]
36:59
the mirror on my wall casts an image
37:03
dark and small
37:04
but i'm not sure at all it's my
37:07
reflection
37:09
i am blinded by the light of god and
37:13
truth and right
37:14
and i wander in the night without
37:17
direction
37:20
so so i'll continue
37:23

to continue to continue to pretend

37:28

my life will never end

37:33

and flowers never bend

37:37

with the rainfall

37:39

[Music]

37:42

no matter if you're born to play the

37:45

king

37:46

upon for the line is thinly drawn

37:49

between joy and sorrow

37:53

so my fantasy becomes reality

37:57

and i must be what i must be and face

38:00

tomorrow

38:02

[Music]

38:16

and

38:21

[Music]

38:30

rainfall

38:46

you