UNITED IN SOLACE AND GRACE

Creating Bridges between Survivors of Abuse and the Church

Creating safe spaces for prayer and reflection.

Thank you for enquiring about United in Solace and Grace. We hope that this paper will show you a little of the history, and the thinking behind these remarkable services.

HISTORY

UNITED IN SOLACE AND GRACE began with a reflective service which was put together in response to the historical abuse scandals in the Church of England and the Makin report it was developed by Revd Jenny Seggar, a church of England Rural Parish Priest, and her daughter, who works for the charity Survivors in Transition (Ipswich). they combined their expertise in working with survivors, Trauma Informed Practice and liturgy to produce a deeply reflective and sensitive service which gives survivors, supporters and professionals a chance to reflect and pray, to mark the end of Its Not OK Week 2025.

the service went down well with professionals and survivors, and Jenny was delighted to receive an award from the University of Suffolk and Survivors in Transition for innovation in Trauma informed practice.

Other services are in the process of being developed, as well as looking at how churches can become safe spaces for survivors of abuse, and how we can build bridges with the survivors community rooted in Trauma Informed Practice.

United in Solace and Grace is a small beginning

THE PRINCIPALS BEHIND UNITED IN SOLACE AND GRACE

* Solace (comfort) for all
  + We aim to be genuinely inclusive making no distinction between people, and we do not ask why they come, or whether they are Christian.
* Grace
  + Christian principles of grace tell us that all are equally loved and all are forgiven. We aim to model this in our services and in our worship space
* Creating and Building Bridges
  + We aim to begin to create bridges between survivors and the church, including supporters and professionals
* Accommodating Trauma (Trauma Informed Practice
  + we aim to centre everything round trauma informed practice, not just united in solace and grace, but in our everyday worship and our worship spaces - this is a work in progress!

TRAUMA INFORMED PRACTICE

Trauma-informed practice is a way of working that supports professionals from a range of disciplines in delivering care to individuals who have experienced psychological trauma. It recognises that ‘trauma’ survivors have experienced extremely abnormal situations, which can include various types of abuse. It is based on five core principals (safety, trustworthiness, choice, Peer support, and empowerment, as well as taking account of cultural and gender issues.) the approach aims to avoid re-traumatisation, and to create a safe space for survivors.

This is how principals of trauma informed practice are used within United in Solace and Grace

**Safety**

Recognising the impact of trauma and working to avoid practices that could trigger painful memories, and adjusting our worship space and our liturgy accordingly

**Trustworthiness**

Building trust and being transparent in our policies and practices, being open about our worship and liaising with survivors, supporters and professionals. This includes safeguarding.

**Peer Support**

Supporting those involved in United in Solace and Grace, liaising with our peer colleagues in the deanery and diocese, including the diocesan safeguarding leads, building relationships with survivors organisations and charities. Working across denominations where possible.

**Collaboration and mutuality**

we aim to introduce United in Solace and Grace to other churches, including those of different traditions and denominations, working with them to build their links, and sharing skills and expertise. We hope to work with the survivors in our own church communities where possible to develop the services.

**Empowerment**

we are building links with survivors groups, and survivors, and consulting on the content of United in Solace and Grace services, and the way we develop our worship and worship spaces – where possible we include survivors in the decision making for the services. We aim to give survivors a voice in the church.

*(please note we do not aim to water down our usual liturgy and worship practices, but aim to find ways for these to be as trauma informed as possible)*

**Culture, Historical and Gender Issues**

United in Solace and Grace was formed in response to cultural and historical issues within the Church of England - we are passionate about doing something positive to ensure as far as we can that these issues are not repeated.

we aim to become a voice of positivity in a difficult world.

LITURGY

We are working with our partner groups and contacts to develop liturgy for these services. in some cases prayers have been changed a little, in some cases re-written. However, much of the material we use has been written freshly for the USG services. We take out and rewrite any parental or power based references to God and have gender balanced the wording purely to avoid triggers. All this has been carried out with great prayer, and advice from senior clergy where necessary.

Material is taken from a variety of traditions, including some non-christian sources. This encourages those from a non-christian background to engage with the material. This is particularly evident in the reflection (prayer) stations which are based around the elements of Earth, Air, Water, fire and Spirit.

Bible readings are chosen carefully to reflect the theme of the service.

We do not encourage the singing of hymns, although music plays an important part of the service. any songs chosen to play in a service will reflect the theme of the service.

Grounding words and phrases are put up around the church and the service sheets are embossed to give people a grounding point of contact.+

I have attached the script for the first and second services to give an idea of the flavour of what we are aiming for.

We are working towards some sacramental ‘moments’ in the services (see service 2) and we hope to include some healing elements (non contact) in the future.

If you would like to work towards holding a United in Solace and Grace service within your benefice we would be only too happy to come and chat to PCC or ministry team, and invite you to experience a service before you make up your mind finally.

We have found this to be a scary but deeply cathartic experience, and it has allowed some of the survivors in our own churches to come out of the darkness and find a positive voice in our churches, gaining a sense of purpose.

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