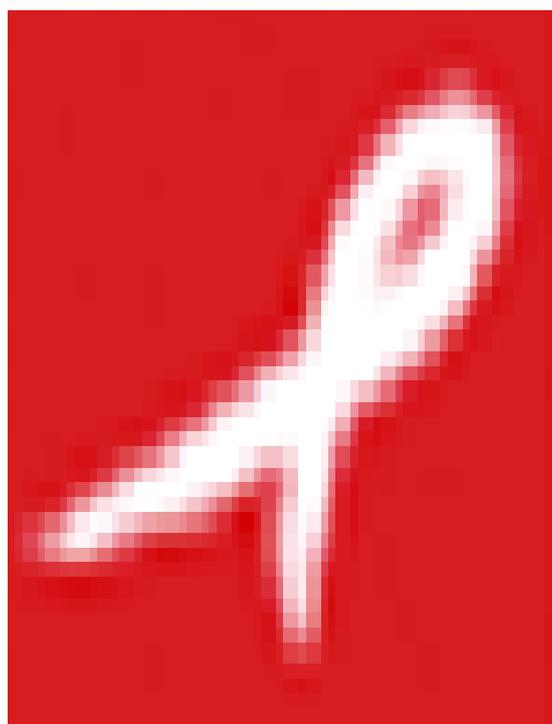


Diakonia Council of Churches



WORLD AIDS DAY LITURGY

1 December 2011



“Getting to Zero ...”



World AIDS Day is celebrated on December 1 each year around the world. It has become one of the most recognised international health days and a key opportunity to raise awareness, commemorate those who have passed on, and celebrate victories such as increased access to treatment and prevention services.

UNAIDS took the lead on World AIDS Day campaigning from its creation until 2004. From 2004 onwards the World AIDS Campaign's Global Steering Committee began selecting a theme for World AIDS Day in consultation with civil society organisations and government agencies involved in the AIDS response.

Themes run for one or two years and are not just specific to World AIDS Day. Campaigning slogans such as 'Stop AIDS. Keep the Promise' have been used year round to hold governments accountable for their HIV and AIDS related commitments.

History of World AIDS Day

World AIDS Day Timeline : 1988 – 2011

World AIDS Day Publications

Publications and reports on human rights and universal access

<http://www.worldaidscampaign.org/world-aids-day/>

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Global launch of campaign 'Better Aid for The World We Want'

On the International Day for the Eradication of Poverty civil society organisations all around the world launch a global campaign...



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World AIDS Day this year is about “*Getting to Zero*”. ‘Zero New HIV Infections’. ‘Zero Discrimination’ and ‘Zero AIDS Related-Deaths’. Backed by the United Nations the “*Getting to Zero*” campaign runs until 2015 and builds on last year’s successful World AIDS Day “*Light for Rights*” initiative encompassing a range of vital issues identified by key affected populations. “The potential for creative, connected and meaningful campaigning is really exciting,” says World AIDS Campaign Africa Director, Linda Mafu. “Our organization will focus on Zero AIDS-Related Deaths, but the choice is there for others to pick a different zero or all three.” The World AIDS Campaign focus on “*Zero AIDS-Related Deaths*” signifies a push towards greater access to treatment for all; a call for governments to act now. A demand they honour promises like the Abuja declaration and that African Governments at very least hit agreed targets for domestic spending on health and HIV in support of the human right to the best attainable level of health care for all.

Introduction

With millions of people already dead, and millions of others either living with, or personally affected by HIV and AIDS; the epidemic constitutes one of the most critical problems for our time. Religious institutions in general, and churches in particular, have very important roles to play in working towards containing the spread of the disease from one person to another; in mobilising care and treatment for those already infected and in mitigating the effects of the disease on the families, communities and the nations that have been affected.

World AIDS Day is a special event for churches. By commemorating this day through worship, prayers, praise, word and testimony; individual Christians and whole congregations are helped to:

- Consolidate the “caring church” concept within their activities and plans.
- Break down barriers of prejudice, fear, stigma, and complacency which still hinder our open discussion about and practical action against the disease - AIDS.
- Acquire more spiritual and social strength, and resources to work against the disease and its determinant factors.
- The practice of listening to God’s word and the discipline of prayer have always been very important dimensions of our spirituality, but they are even more imperative today given the increased burden of diseases, famine and conflicts in our families, communities and amongst our nations. World AIDS Day gives us both the opportunity and responsibility to ask for, and find God’s mercy, grace and help in this critical time of need.

Call to Worship:

Close your eyes, clear your minds and open your hearts to the healing power of the Divine. Whatever your individual need for healing, know that the miracle of wholeness can be yours - regardless of any diagnosis. Know that for others, God's Divine Love and Infinite Wisdom are guiding them at this very moment, infusing every cell and every organ of their bodies with healing light. Imagine with me a world that is committed to health and justice for all and see with me a world where every heart is filled with compassion and every mind is open to the life-giving energy of Spirit. And from this place of hope and compassion we give thanks to God for the commitment of many organisations to health and to justice, for researchers around the world who are working to eradicate the AIDS virus. We honour those already infected and those who have already passed for their courage. We send love and blessings to them today! ... With grateful and compassionate hearts, we go forth to do that which is ours to do - to create a world that works for all. **Amen**

Order of Service

Theme: “Getting to Zero ...”

Musical Prelude

Welcome: (Please note that all responses are printed in **bold**.)

Opening Hymn of Confession:

Written by Archbishop Denis Hurley

(sung to the tune for ‘When I survey the Wondrous Cross’)

1. **You gave us, Christ, by word and deed,
The way of love your Parent willed,
That those who go where'er You lead
May find in You a life fulfilled.**

2. **Mangithwale izithelo
EzoMoya oyiNgcwele,
Zonke lezi ezenkolo
Nezothando nezoxolo.**

3. **And blessed too are those who mourn,
The merciful, the pure of heart,
And those by thirst and hunger torn
That justice hold its rightful part.**

4. **Lezi zinto mazikhule
Njalonjal' enhliziyweni,
Okwegqabo nokomona
Nento eziphuma khona.**

5. **We humbly ask your pardon, God;
The ones that hear are all too few.
So speak again your healing word,
Our sin forgive, our heart renew.**

Leader: In the name of Christ, your sins are forgiven.

Response: **In the name of Christ, you are forgiven. Amen**

Meditation:

The video “**No Child Born with HIV**” of ‘The One’ Campaign

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ejgQFbPBumw&feature=related>

Or

UNAIDS “**Zero new HIV infections. Zero discrimination. Zero AIDS-related deaths.**”

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=tispA4WJYEM> can be downloaded and played as part of the service.

Scripture Reading: We listen for the Word of God to us today.

Isaiah 65:17-23 (Adapted from the New International Version - NIV)

A New Heaven and a New Earth

“See, I will create a new heaven and a new earth.

The former things will not be remembered, nor will they come to mind.

But be glad and rejoice forever in what I will create,

for I will create Jerusalem to be a delight and its people a joy.

I will rejoice over Jerusalem and take delight in my people;

the sound of weeping and of crying will be heard in it no more.

Never again will there be in it an infant who lives but a few days,

or old people who do not live out their years; the one who dies at a hundred

will be thought a mere child; the one who fails to reach a hundred

will be considered accursed. They will build houses and dwell in them;

they will plant vineyards and eat their fruit.

No longer will they build houses and others live in them, or plant and others eat.

For as the days of a tree, so will be the days of my people;

my chosen ones will long enjoy the work of their hands.

They will not labour in vain, nor will they bear children doomed to misfortune;

for they will be a people blessed by God, they and their descendants with them.”

*A litany in 3 voices: the leader is Voice 1
the congregation is Voice 2
a third person is Voice 3*

The preacher starts immediately after the song.

The words can be shown on screen.

Three candles should burn in the front of the church.

*Every time Voice 3 speaks, a candle is extinguished,
symbolising hopelessness.*

Leader: O God, You are the Ever-present,
The One who knows everything,
The One who listens...
And yet there are still voices who plead,
“O God hear my prayer... hear my Plea”

Congregation: “**God is my shepherd; I shall not want.**” (Ps 23:1)

3d Voice: “My God, my God, why have you forsaken me? (Ps 22:2)

Congregation: “**God, you alone are my portion ...;
you make my lot secure.** (Ps 16:5)

3d Voice: “My God, my God, why have you forsaken me? (Ps 22:2)

Congregation: “**You hem me in behind and before,
and you lay your hand upon me.**” (Ps 139:5)

3rd Voice: “My God, my God, why have you forsaken me? (Ps 22:2)

Leader: Dear God, You are the Ever-present,
The One who knows everything,
The One who listens...
Through us, bring answers to those who feel lost,
Because to us you entrusted the ministry of reconciliation.

Blessing:

Leader: Blessed are the merciful, for they will be shown mercy.

Congregation answers by singing “May we be a shining light”
(or a relevant hymn of choice)

1. May we be a shining light to the nations
A shining light to the peoples of the earth
Till the whole world sees the glory of your name
May Your pure light shine through us.
2. May we bring a word of hope to the nations
A word of life to the peoples of the earth
Till the whole world knows
There’s salvation through your name
May Your mercy flow through us.
3. May we be a healing balm to the nations
A healing balm to the peoples of the earth
Till the whole world knows
The power of your name
May your healing flow through us.

4. May we sing a song of joy to the nations
A song of praise to the peoples of the earth
Till the whole world rings
With the praises of your name
May your song be sung through us.

5. May your kin'dom come to the nations
May your will be done in the peoples of the earth
Till the whole world knows
That Jesus Christ is Lord
May your kin'dom come in us (2).

Re-light the three candles while the song is being sung - symbolising that our hope can never be extinguished.

Offering:

During the offering, the following song may be played in the background:
Andrew Peterson - "The Silence of God" (or music of choice).

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=cvytewIxl10>

Prayer before the sermon:

Prayer of Scott McKnight is read as a litany by a reader with a response by the congregation:

Reader: Because we love God, we say:

Congregation: Our Parent who art in heaven,

Reader: Because loving God means that we yearn for God to make his glory known, we say:

Congregation: Hallowed be thy name. Thy kin'dom come. Thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven.

Reader: Because loving God means we love others as God loves others, we long for all to have the necessities of life, and we say:

Congregation: Give us this day our daily bread.

Reader: Because we love others, we seek to unleash God's grace of forgiveness and say:

Congregation: Forgive us our sins as we forgive those who sin against us.

Reader: Because we love others, we long that they will love and live God's will, so we say:

Congregation: And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil.

Reader: Because we love God, and because we love others, we lift our hearts to God and say:

Congregation: For Thine is the kin'dom, the power, and the glory. Forever and ever. Amen.

Reader: We say this today because we love God and love others.

Sermon: (Guidelines are available on the CABSA website.)

Questions and comments for reflection:

1. Have we, as people of faith, contributed to the challenges related to the HIV and AIDS epidemic? (We have to admit that our passiveness and denial contributed to stigma.)
2. Have our actions and example not contributed to the silence around HIV, the reluctance to be open about an HIV positive diagnosis?

We often talk in accusing ways about a crisis in society. HIV and AIDS is one of the issues of which we talk in this way with and about each other: *'It is their way of life that caused it.'* But where do we stand? Do we not contribute to the spread of HIV, or to the fact that people living with HIV become ill or eventually die of AIDS-related conditions?

We do, because we contribute to stigmatising the disease. We whisper about it, we don't talk openly about it, we don't make sure that we have accurate information - all this contributes to HIV being a 'disgrace-disease'. Because we do this, others are also silent, they carry their pain and bitterness alone. We blame others - just like Adam and Eve!

But true communal confession does something different - it focuses our hope on God and makes it impossible for us to escape our own responsibility any longer. And this is our invitation from the Spirit. And in this invitation there is a reminder of God's work.

If our congregation realises that God is still our Holy Parent and are able to honestly look at God, ourselves and the HIV epidemic, then we will have the courage to carry on, break the silence and become involved in the epidemic, with vulnerability and compassion.

3. How can we become involved in the HIV epidemic today by accepting our shared responsibility?
4. How can we, the faith communities in our city, ensure that people with HIV have access to healthcare services and medication?
5. How do we create space where silence and stigma can be broken down?

Commitment:

After the sermon the preacher invites the congregation to be part of the last movement of the liturgy:

The congregation stands and together confesses the extract below from the confession of Belhar;

Then three people come to the front and carry the three burning candles to the doors;

The congregation is invited to each collect a candle as they leave the church, which they then light from the big candles at the doors;

This serves as confession that we do not always care for the 'lights' of others, but also a commitment that we choose to be representatives of the 'Light' we carry to a world of darkness.

Confession of faith: (adapted from Part 4 of the Belhar Confession)

We believe

that God is revealed as the one who wishes to bring about justice and true peace among all people;

that in a world full of injustice and enmity God is in a special way the God of the destitute, the poor and the wronged and that God calls the Church to follow Christ in this;

that God brings justice to the oppressed and gives bread to the hungry;

that God frees the prisoner and restores sight to the blind;

that God supports the downtrodden and protects the stranger,

helps orphans and widows and blocks the path of the ungodly;

that for God pure and undefiled religion is to visit the orphans and the widows in their suffering;

that God wishes to teach all people to do what is good and to seek the right.

Hymn:

Congregation sings "Ubi Caritas" or a similar hymn while they leave the church, lighting their candles on the way out.

An alternative song:

Walking in the Light of God

Siyahamb' ekukhanyeni kweNkosi (x4)
Siyahamba, hamba, Siyahamba, hamba,
Siyahamb' ekukhanyeni kweNkosi.
Siyahamba, hamba, Siyahamba, hamba,
Siyahamb' ekukhanyeni kweNkosi.

We are walking in the light of God (x4)
We are walking, walking, we are walking, walking,
We are walking in the light of God.
We are walking, walking, we are walking, walking,
We are walking in the light of God.

Benediction:

Now may the God of peace sanctify you completely; and may your whole spirit, soul, and body be preserved blameless at the coming of Christ Jesus. **AMEN**

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Acknowledgements:

Resource – *AfricaPraying – A Handbook on HIV/AIDS Sensitive Sermon Guidelines and Liturgy*, edited by Musa W Dube (2003:77ff)

Ecumenical Advocacy Alliance – <http://www.e-alliance.ch/en/s/>

CABSA – <http://www.cabsa.org.za/content/cabsa-world-aids-day-liturgies-2011>

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