

# World **AIDS** Day

1 December 2008



**LEADERSHIP BY EXAMPLE**  
***STOP AIDS – KEEP THE PROMISE***

## **INTRODUCTION**

Since World AIDS Day was first declared in 1988 it has posed a special challenge to churches and Christians, falling as it does at the beginning of the Advent season. The hope and expectation that comes in preparing to celebrate the birth of Jesus has contrasted sharply with the suffering of people living with or affected by HIV and AIDS, and the deaths of over 25 million people due to AIDS related illnesses.

The overall purpose of the World AIDS Campaign from 2005 to 2010 is to ensure that leaders and decision makers deliver on their promises and obligations on HIV and AIDS – including the provision of access to treatment and care for all.

*'Leadership by example'* has been chosen as the global campaigning concept in consultation with faith-based organisations. This theme will continue to be promoted with the campaigning slogan, "*Stop AIDS. Keep the Promise*".

Since the beginning of the pandemic, experience has clearly demonstrated that significant advances in our responses to HIV have been achieved when there is strong and committed leadership. Leaders are distinguished by their action, innovation and vision; their personal example and engagement of others; and their perseverance in the face of obstacles and challenges. However, leaders are often not those in the highest offices. Leadership must be demonstrated at every level to get ahead of the disease – in families, in communities, in countries and internationally. Much of the best leadership on AIDS has been demonstrated within civil society organisations challenging the status quo.

The devastating effects of the pandemic are arguably greater here in KwaZulu-Natal, than anywhere else in the world. In some rural areas of the province, the prevalence rate is as high as 80%. Millions are affected, hundreds of thousands are sick and dying, and more and more children are being orphaned resulting in many child-headed households. Our elders are increasingly being expected to care for larger numbers of babies and children as we lose an entire generation to the associated infections of HIV and AIDS.

The leadership of our country has been criticised for its poor response to the pandemic – both in its policies and praxis. Antiretroviral medications have not been made available to all, and mother to child infections continue to occur at alarming rates. With recent changes in leadership we have the opportunity to see new policies established and a renewed commitment to creating an AIDS free society.

As people of God it is our role to support those in leadership, but also to lead by example. We need to lead the way in prayer, in caring and supporting those who suffer, but also in showing no favour or bias to those who would otherwise be excluded or marginalised. We must lead the way in speaking out against policies that do not *'Keep the Promise'* – and we must do so boldly.

May our prayers be our foundation for action to keep our promises, and hold others to theirs, so that future generations will not live in a time of AIDS.

## **LEADERSHIP BY EXAMPLE**

As followers of Christ Jesus, we are called to be examples of his love, his hospitality, inclusivity, caring and refusal to be satisfied with anything less than that which would offer life and hope and would point us to God's kingdom – here on this earth and in the life to come.

As leaders in our homes, in our communities and in our places of worship, we are called to lead the right way. We are called to lead boldly and fearlessly. We are assured that God will always be with us, both in our reluctance to lead and in our eagerness to show the way.

As preachers of the good news, we are called to lead our people away from untruth, deception and lies, into truth and into another world, which is possible.

As women and men of God we are called to speak out against all forms of injustice. Within the context of the HIV and AIDS pandemic, it is incumbent on us to speak truth to all forms of power and to those who would usurp and distort power and position for their own gains or out of their own inadequacies. We must speak for those who cannot and cry out for those who have lost their voice.

Our scriptures tell us that we must be leaders against all illness, including HIV and AIDS and the related infections and ills. We understand that this is a radical type of leadership, requiring radical thinking, unsettling examples and divine inspiration. Orthodox habits of religions have failed us in our work against the contamination of our bodies by HIV as much as they failed the ancients in their struggle against the contamination of the people of God by sin.

In Southern Africa, a radical new and bold leadership is called for by God, to chart a new course. We give thanks for and celebrate the appointment of new leaders who have been charged with the task of plotting this course. There is hope – hope that comes from medicine, accurate information, and the conviction and action of people of faith to overcome stigma and discrimination and demonstrate love, compassion and practical support. It is the role of the church and those who lead and serve us to enable healing, and to invoke acceptance of those infected and affected into the kingdom of God, by all.

## **WORLD AIDS DAY LITURGY**

This liturgy is intended to remind us of our deep need for leadership by example - leadership that will provide protection without favour, love without bias, and care without prejudice.

Hymns and prayers have been provided as suggestions and may be replaced or substituted where necessary to provide for language and cultural differences. Leaders are encouraged to add to this liturgy, contributing to its richness and diversity.

## **SUGGESTIONS TO COMMUNICATE OUR FAITH AND DEMONSTRATE OUR COMMITMENT**

Red ribbons are internationally recognised as symbols of compassion for people affected or infected by HIV and AIDS.

*Action: Provide ribbons for the congregants.  
Place a visible red ribbon (or other suitable cloth) on the altar.*

Candles are a universal symbol of hope and light.

*Action: Light a special candle, or use candles during the service.*

Posters and pamphlets are useful tools in creating awareness of issues around the pandemic, such as stigma or prejudice.

*Action Place posters in churches, halls and make information available for people to take home.  
Include information on AIDS programmes and resources in your pew leaflets, on notice boards, and in your communications with congregants.*

Testimonies to the truth of God's love, and inclusive and caring nature, point us to the true nature of the kingdom God has designed.

*Action: Invite a person living positively with HIV, someone with AIDS, or someone who is working in the health care sector such as a nurse, doctor or caregiver, to address the congregation during the service.*

Solidarity with those who suffer brings us closer to the face of God.

*Action: Arrange for a visit to a hospice or related centre that cares for people affected or infected with HIV or AIDS.  
Visit a child-headed household or a household headed by a grandparent, as a build-up or follow-up to this service.*

## **INSPIRATION**

*"We are one body of Christ; if one member suffers, we all suffer together. God calls upon us to be compassionate; to suffer with those who suffer, to enter their places and hearts of pain, and to seek lasting change for their suffering.*

*In this HIV and AIDS era, shall we not have zero tolerance for the stigma and discrimination of HIV and AIDS? Should we not do all that is necessary to eliminate the isolation, rejection, fear, and oppression of the infected and affected in our communities? And should we not collectively and persistently undertake our prophetic and advocacy role until quality care and treatment are available to all who need them?*

*Declare the jubilee and proclaim liberty throughout the land and to all its inhabitants. (Leviticus 25:10) For unless and until justice is served to all people in the world, until justice rolls down like waters and righteousness like an ever-flowing stream, our moral consciousness will never be free. May you who have ears, hear what the Spirit says to the churches.*

*Gracious God, guide us day by day in every way that we might be instruments of your love, compassion, and healing as we encounter neighbours in need. Amen.”*

(Revd Dr Mvume Dandala – Secretary General of the All Africa Conference of Churches)

***“Thank you, God, that we are all precious in your sight. Bless all seeking a vaccine and all who care for the sick, filling them with hope. Comfort them all for Jesus’ sake. Amen”***  
(Archbishop Emeritus Desmond Tutu)



## LITURGY

### CALL TO WORSHIP

**Leader:** From within the cracks that tear our world,

**Response:** We wait for the One that can restore us.

**Leader:** From within the gaps that mark our lives,

**Response:** We wait for the One that can repair us.

**Leader:** From within the narrowness that compresses our openness,

**Response:** We wait for the One that expands horizons.

**Leader:** From within the wideness in which we lose ourselves,

**Response:** We wait for the One that graciously leads.

**All:** We gather together in search of the inexhaustible search of life  
The endless healing source of life -  
Who will lead us from despair to hope, from sorrow to joy,  
from ailing to health, from death to life.

### OPENING HYMN

#### **Psalm 23 (Variation)**

Such perfect love our Shepherd shows,  
whose goodness fails us never.  
We nothing lack if we have love  
and love is ours fore'er.

Where streams of living water flow  
our ransomed souls God leads,  
and where the e'ergreen pastures grow,  
with food from heaven does feed.

Careless and foolish oft we stray,  
yet God in love seeks us,  
and on the shoulder gently lays,  
and home, rejoicing, brings.

In death's deep vale we fear no ill  
with Thee, dear God, Our Friend;  
Your rod and staff our comfort still,  
Your people here to send.

You spread a table in our sight;  
Your grace on us bestow;  
And O what transports of delight  
from Thy pure chalice flow!

And so through all the length of days  
Your goodness at our side;  
Good Shepherd, may we sing Your praise  
and in Your house abide.

## **PRAYER**

**Leader:** God all powerful and all knowing, encircle us  
Keep love within and fear without  
Keep peace within and violence out.

**Response:** Circle us with your presence - lead us into love.

**Leader:** God all loving and all embracing, encircle us  
Keep wholeness in and disease without  
Keep care within and selfishness without.

**Response:** Circle us with your love - lead us into love.

**Leader:** God all mighty and all caring, encircle us  
Keep truth within and injustice out  
Keep acceptance in and prejudice out.

**Response:** Circle us with your peace - lead us into love.

**Leader:** God may we be instruments of your peace today  
In a world divided by war and strife  
May we be your reconcilers.

**Leader:** In a world of hurt and pain

**Response:** May we be those who care for our enemies

**Leader:** In a world that kills and maims

**Response:** May we be those who heal and restore

**All:** God lead us in peace through the pathway of your love  
To the promise of your kingdom.

## **FIRST READING: Psalm 10: 1, 12 – 18**

*“God, are you avoiding me? Where are you when I need you?*

*Time to get up, God - get moving.*

*The luckless think they're God forsaken.*

*They wonder why the wicked scorn God and get away with it,*

*Why the wicked are so sure they'll never come up for audit.*

*But you know all about it - the contempt, the abuse.*

*I dare to believe that the luckless will get lucky someday in you.*

*You won't let them down: orphans won't be orphans forever.*

*Break the wicked right arms, break all the evil left arms.*

*Search and destroy every sign of crime.*

*God's grace and order wins; godlessness loses.*

*The victim's faint pulse picks up; the hearts of the hopeless pump red blood  
as you put your ear to their lips.*

*Orphans get parents, the homeless get homes.*

*The reign of terror is over, the rule of the gang lords is ended.”*

*(Source: “The Message” – other translations of the Bible may be substituted)*

## **PRAYER**

**Leader:** Blessed are You, Holy One, Searing Fire,

**Response:** For leading us away from all forms of prejudice and  
condemnation of anyone affected by HIV and AIDS.

**Leader:** Blessed are You, Holy One, Shedder of Tears,

**Response:** For calling us to weep for injustices highlighted by HIV and  
AIDS.

**Leader:** Blessed are You, Holy One, Sorrowful Mother,

**Response:** For giving us symbols of our mourning for those affected by  
HIV and AIDS, for giving us carers, and for reminding us of the  
fragility of all life.

**Leader:** Blessed are You, Holy One, Future Hope,

**Response:** For leading us in this time of HIV and AIDS, for re-igniting the  
fires of justice, hope and new life from within the desert of  
death and despair.



## **SECOND READING: Matt 15: 21 – 39**

*“From there Jesus took a trip to Tyre and Sidon. They had hardly arrived when a Canaanite woman came down from the hills and pleaded, “Mercy, Master, Son of David! My daughter is cruelly afflicted by an evil spirit.”*

*Jesus ignored her. The disciples came and complained, “Now she’s bothering us. Would you please take care of her? She’s driving us crazy.”*

*Jesus refused, telling them, “I’ve got my hands full dealing with the lost sheep of Israel.”*

*Then the woman came back to Jesus, went to her knees, and begged. “Master, help me.”*

*He said, “It’s not right to take bread out of children’s mouths and throw it to dogs.”*

*She was quick: “You’re right, Master, but beggar dogs do get scraps from the master’s table.”*

*Jesus gave in. “Oh, woman, your faith is something else. What you want is what you get!” Right then her daughter became well.*

*After Jesus returned, he walked along Lake Galilee and then climbed a mountain and took his place, ready to receive visitors. They came, tons of them, bringing along the paraplegic, the blind, the maimed, the mute—all sorts of people in need—and more or less threw them down at Jesus’ feet to see what he would do with them. He healed them. When the people saw the mutes speaking, the maimed healthy, the paraplegics walking around, the blind looking around, they were astonished and let everyone know that God was blazingly alive among them.*

*But Jesus wasn’t finished with them. He called his disciples and said, “I hurt for these people. For three days now they’ve been with me, and now they have nothing to eat. I can’t send them away without a meal—they’d probably collapse on the road.”*

*His disciples said, “But where in this deserted place are you going to dig up enough food for a meal?”*

*Jesus asked, “How much bread do you have?” “Seven loaves,” they said, “plus a few fish.” At that, Jesus directed the people to sit down. He took the seven loaves and the fish. After giving thanks, he divided it up and gave it to the people. Everyone ate. They had all they wanted. It took seven large baskets to collect the leftovers. Over four thousand people ate their fill at that meal. After Jesus sent them away, he climbed in the boat and crossed over to the Magadan hills.”*

*(Source: “The Message” – other translations of the Bible may be substituted)*



**CHORUS:**

Senzeni na? Senzeni na? (x4)

What have we done? What have we done? (x4)

**THIRD READING: James 5: 13 – 20**

*“Are you hurting? Pray. Do you feel great? Sing. Are you sick? Call the church leaders together to pray and anoint you with oil in the name of the Master. Believing-prayer will heal you, and Jesus will put you on your feet. And if you've sinned, you'll be forgiven - healed inside and out.*

*Make this your common practice: Confess your sins to each other and pray for each other so that you can live together whole and healed. The prayer of a person living right with God is something powerful to be reckoned with. Elijah, for instance, human just like us, prayed hard that it wouldn't rain, and it didn't—not a drop for three and a half years. Then he prayed that it would rain, and it did. The showers came and everything started growing again.*

*My dear friends, if you know people who have wandered off from God's truth, don't write them off. Go after them. Get them back and you will have rescued precious lives from destruction and prevented an epidemic of wandering away from God.”*

*(Source: “The Message” – other translations of the Bible may be substituted)*

**CHORUS:**

Let there be peace shared among us  
Let there be peace in our hearts  
Let now this peace sweep our nations  
Cause us O God to arise  
Give us a fresh understanding of peace that is real  
Let there be peace in our homes  
Let there be peace.

**OR**

Give me oil in my lamp – keep it burning  
Give me oil in my lamp I pray.  
Give me oil in my lamp – keep it burning  
Keep it burning till the break of day.

**CALL TO CONFESSION (With dimmed lights and TEN candles lit)**

**Leader:** We turn to you O God.

**Response:** O Nkosi sicela uxolo.

**Leader:** For our world is divided by sin and our lives are broken.

**Response:** We turn to you O God.

**Leader:** Our vanity separates us from each other and our thirst for power creates a gap between us.

**Response:** Ons keer na U O God

**Leader:** We enjoy being privileged even when it means the exclusion of our brothers and sisters.

**Response:** We turn to you O God.

**Leader:** Our misuse of authority brings injustice, impunity and corruption.

**Response:** O Nkosi sicela uxolo

**Leader:** Our insensibility to people's needs, smash their rights and implement rejection.

**Response:** We turn to you O God.

**Leader:** Our unruly competition disturbs our call to serve one another.

**Response:** Ons keer na U O God.

**Leader:** Our pursuit of our own interests, lusts, greed and instant relief has sown pain and death in our lives.

**Response:** We turn to you O Great healer and leader – bring a new creation into light.

**PRAYER OF CONFESSION** *(Each prayer can be said aloud by all or by selected readers. After each refrain, extinguish one candle.)*

We confess that it is always more about us and less about You.  
Forgive us Gracious God.

We confess that we have deserted those who mourn, forgetting how to comfort.  
Forgive us Jesus – we have deserted you.

We confess that our greed and pride has built kingdoms not of your design.  
Have mercy on us, Healing Spirit of God.

We confess that we are seldom content with who we are and what we have.  
Forgive us Bountiful God.

We confess we turn a blind eye to the needs of others.  
Forgive us Jesus – we have ignored you.

We confess we have little mercy and compassion for those who suffer.  
Have mercy on us, Caring Spirit of God.

We confess our deceitful and hardened hearts - forgetting your ways.  
Forgive us Merciful God.

We confess that we do not make peace.  
Forgive us Jesus – we have warred against you.

We confess that we have become persecutors – driven away from you.  
Lead us back to you, Guiding Holy Spirit.

***(Silence for 5 minutes – then lights can be turned up.)***

## **SECOND HYMN**

### **Where Cross the Crowded Ways of Life.**

***(Tune: When I Survey the Wondrous Cross)***

Where cross the crowded ways of life,  
Where sound the cries of race and tribe,  
Above the noise of selfish strife,  
We hear thy voice, O Christ abide.

From tender childhood's helplessness,  
From woman's grief, man's burdened toil,  
From famished souls, from sorrow's stress,  
Thy heart has never known recoil.

The cup of water given for thee  
Still holds the freshness of thy grace;  
Yet long these multitudes to see  
The sweet compassion of thy face.

O Master, from the mountain side,  
Make haste to heal these hearts of pain;  
Among these restless throngs abide,  
O tread the city's streets again;

Till all the world shall learn thy love,  
And follow where thy feet have trod;  
Till glorious from thy heaven above,  
Shall come the City of our God.

*Words of hymn by: Frank Mason North, 1903*

## SERMON

### *Scriptural reflections which may contribute to the preparation of the sermon:*

#### **Psalm 10: 1, 12 - 18**

To the psalmist, God seems far away. But even though the writer had honest doubts, he did not stop praying, nor did he conclude that God no longer cared. He was not complaining but simply asking God to hurry to his aid. It is during such times when we feel most alone or oppressed that we need to keep praying, telling God about our troubles.

There exists an incompatibility between blind arrogance and the presence of God in our hearts and lives. Proud people depend on themselves rather than on God. This causes God' guiding influences to leave our lives. When God's presence is welcome, there is no room for pride because God makes us aware of our true selves.

God sees and takes note of evil deeds, encourages us, and listens to our cries. God is always with us. We can face the wicked because we do not face them alone. God is by our side always.

#### **Matthew 15: 21 – 39**

Puzzled by Jesus' silence, the disciples asked him to get rid of the woman because she was bothering *them* with her persistent begging and pleading. They showed no compassion for her or sensitivity to her needs. It is possible that we become so occupied with spiritual matters that we become oblivious to the needs around us. This may be true especially if we are prejudiced against needy people or if they cause us inconvenience. Instead of being annoyed, we should become more aware of the opportunities that surround us, make an effort to look for ways to minister to others.

Jesus' words do not contradict the truth that God's message is for all people. (Isaiah 56:7) After all, when Jesus said these words he was in Gentile territory on a mission to Gentile people. He ministered to Gentiles on many other occasions too. Jesus was simply telling the woman that Jews were to have the first opportunity to accept him as the Messiah because God wanted them to present the message of salvation to the rest of the world (Genesis 12:3). Jesus was not rejecting the Gentile woman. He may have wanted to test her faith, or he may have wanted to use the situation as another opportunity to teach that faith is available to all people.

'Dog' was a term the Jews commonly applied to Gentiles the Jews considered these pagan people no more likely than a dog to receive God's blessing. Jesus was not degrading the woman by using the term; he was reflecting the Jews' attitude so as to contrast it with his own. The woman did not argue. Instead using Jesus' choice of words, she agreed to be considered a dog, as long as she could receive God's blessing for her daughter. Ironically, many Jews would lose God's blessing and salvation because they rejected Jesus, and many Gentiles would find salvation because they recognised him and accepted him.



A vast crowd was brought to Jesus to be healed, and he healed them all. Jesus is still able to heal people who are suffering physically, emotionally or spiritually, and we can all play a role in bringing those who suffer to Jesus – or Jesus to them. Whom do we know that needs Jesus' healing touch? We can bring them to Jesus through prayer and let Jesus do the healing. We can also seek out ways to bring Jesus to them through our presence and solidarity with them.

This feeding of 4 000 is a separate event from the feeding of the 5 000, confirmed by Mark 8: 19, 20. This was the beginning of Jesus' expanded ministry to the Gentiles. Jesus had already fed more than 5 000 people with two fish and five loaves. Here, in a similar situation, the disciples were again perplexed. How easily we throw up our hands in despair when faced with difficult situations. Like the disciples, we often forget that God has cared for us in the past, and he will do the same now. When facing a difficult situation, remember that God cares for us and we ought to trust him to work faithfully again.

### **James 5: 13 - 20**

James is referring to someone who is physically ill. In scriptures, oil was both a medicine and a symbol of the Spirit of God. Thus, oil can represent both the medical and spiritual spheres of life. As Christians we should not separate the physical from the spiritual. Jesus Christ tends and takes of the body and spirit.

People in the church are not alone. Members of Christ's body should be able to count on others for support and prayer, especially when they are sick or suffering. The elders should be on call to respond to the illness of any member, and the church should be sensitive to the needs of all of its members.

The 'prayer offered in faith' does not refer to the faith of the sick person but to the faith of the people praying. God heals, faith doesn't, and all prayers are subject to God's will. But prayer is part of God's healing process.

Christ has made it possible for us to go directly to God for forgiveness. But confessing our sins to each others still has an important place in the life of the church. If we have sinned against an individual, we must ask her or him to forgive us. If our sin has affected the church, we are called to confess it publicly. If we need loving support as we struggle with a sin, we should confess that sin to those who are able to provide that support. If we doubt God's forgiveness, after confessing a sin to God, we may wish to confess that sin to a fellow believer for assurance of God's pardon through grace. In Christ's kingdom, every believer is a priest to other believers (1 Peter 2: 9).

The Christian's most powerful resource is communion with God through prayer. The results are often greater than we thought possible. Some people see prayer as a last resort to be tried when all else fails. This approach is backward – prayer should come first. Because God's power is infinitely greater than ours, it only makes sense to rely on it – especially because God encourages us to do so.

Clearly the person who, in verses 19 and 20, has wandered from the truth is a believer who has fallen into sin – one who is no longer living a life consistent with his or her beliefs. James is emphasising faith in action – right living is the evidence of faith and the result thereof. The church must serve with compassion, speak and act lovingly and truthfully, live in obedience to God's commands, and love every person who is a member of the body – and those who have yet to become members.

The body of believers ought to be an example of heaven here on earth – drawing people to Christ through love for God and each other. If we truly believe God's Word, we will live it day by day. God's Word is not merely something we read or think about, but something we do. Belief, faith and trust must have hands and feet – ours. We can only show the way to Life by leading by example.

### **CHORUS:**

Be still and know that I am God. (x3)

Thula wazi nginguThixo. (x3)

### **PRAYER OF HOPE**

**Leader:** O God we know that you promise hope and life.  
You come to us because you will never forsake us.  
You favour us because we are your creation.  
You lead us out of the desert of despair and death.  
You fill us with awe and wonder,

**Response:** We rejoice in your awesome love and splendour.

**Leader:** You fill us with hope and herald in new life,

**Response:** We dance and sing your praises.

**Leader:** You fill us with promise and point us to your kingdom,

**Response:** We follow you and lead ourselves to a new Oneness with you.

**All:** Amen

*(Allow committal prayer from congregants.)*

### **INTERCESSORY PRAYERS**

**Bidding:** We live in a brittle and broken world. We live in pain and hurt.  
We acknowledge our role in all of this.  
We live in a continent racked with war, strife, poverty, greed, disease and corruption.  
We acknowledge our role in all of this.

We live in a country tempted by power, torn apart by differences, laid bare by selfishness, and searching for honest leadership.  
We acknowledge our role in all of this.  
We live in a city with HIV and AIDS, in search of life.  
We acknowledge our role in all of this.

**Leader:** O Healer God – we draw close to you

**Response:** Teach us to heal.

**Leader:** O Brother of ours – we cry out for hope

**Response:** Comfort us, comfort us.

**Leader:** O Divine Spirit – we gasp for you

**Response:** Fill us with life.

**Leader:** Almighty God, we know you hear our prayers.  
We come before you now in our time of great need.  
We pray for strength to share the burden of illness with all who suffer in the AIDS crisis in our church, in our homes, in our streets and in our valleys.

**Response:** Teach us to lead the way to new life.

**Leader:** We pray for those who suffer from AIDS or any grief borne out of illness. We pray for those who care for them, who nurse them, who doctor them and for those who strive for measures to relieve the pain and hopefully provide a cure.

**Response:** Teach us to lead the way to new life.

**Leader:** We pray for all our leaders. We pray for those who make decisions and for those who fail to do so. We pray for those who honestly serve us, and for those who serve their own needs. We pray for those who would bravely blaze new paths to righteousness, and for those who hide in corridors of deceit. We pray for those who would deny the pain of HIV and AIDS, and we pray for those who have courageously led the struggle thus far.

**Response:** Teach us to lead the way to new life.

**Leader:** We pray for all caregivers and orphans. We pray for all those in hospices and hospitals. We pray for all who support the bereaved and who tend to the grieving. We pray for widows and lovers, for mothers and fathers, for sisters and brothers.

**Response:** Teach us to lead the way to new life.

**All:** Almighty God, our Father and Mother, we ask you to comfort and heal us as we are affected by HIV and AIDS. Grant us compassion, so that in our caring response we may dispel fear and ignorance, and build hope and purpose in our lives. Protect us all, give courage to those in pain, comfort the dying, and hasten the discovery of a cure. We ask this, loving God, because we know you listen to us. Amen.

## **AFFIRMATION OF FAITH**

We believe in God who makes all things visible and invisible known and yet to be known.

Who, as father and mother of all humanity, creates from herself, out of the sheer wonder of love, men and women in her image and likeness.

We believe in Jesus Christ our brother and friend who offered his body in tender and compelling ways to redeem us from all evil and sin to make salvation work for the good of the entire creation. He gathered disciples, became friends with women and learnt from them. He turned ideas upside down and unmasked prejudice to establish an ethic of love where diversity is valued and injustice denounced.

We believe in the Holy Spirit  
a dove brooding over life - a gust of wind blowing freely.  
through corrupt structures and transforming them,  
a comfort to the weak, the lonely and the sick,  
those edged out,  
a gale sometimes, sometimes a soft breeze,  
an intoxicating fragrance that brings us alive.

In life, in death, and in life beyond death,  
We believe in you O God.

## **CLOSING HYMN**

### **For healing of the nations**

For healing of the nations,  
God we pray with one accord;  
For a just and equal sharing  
Of the many things that earth affords;  
To a life of love and action  
Help us rise and pledge our word.



Lead us forward into freedom;  
From despair your world release,  
That we, redeemed from war and hatred,  
All may come and go in peace.  
Show us how through care and goodness  
Fear will die and hope increase.

All that kills abundant living,  
Let it from the earth be banned;  
Pride of status, race or schooling,  
Dogmas that obscure your plan.  
In our common quest for justice  
May we hallow life's brief span.

You Creator God, have spoken  
Your great Name on human kind;  
For our growing in your likeness  
Bring the life of Christ to mind,  
That by our response and service,  
Earth its destiny may find.

### **CLOSING PRAYER**

O Divine Leader, we pray for courage to lead by example.  
We pray for faith in our world filled with doubt.  
We pray for hope in our world of hopelessness.  
We pray for charity in our world of selfishness.  
We pray for love in a lonely world.

Grant that we would become true leaders, following the way of Jesus Christ.  
May the world we meet today, and tomorrow, and the day after that,  
know you through our example.  
Send us out and walk with us – leading the world to your kingdom here on earth  
and into the life hereafter.

**Amen.**



Liturgy prepared by  
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(This liturgy can be downloaded from the website.)

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