

# Stop AIDS. Keep/Make the Promise!

## Don't Turn Your Back on AIDS!

### **Background:**

The World Health Organisation declared the first World AIDS Day in 1988. The day, 1 December, quickly became established as one of the world's most successful commemorative days and is now recognised and celebrated by a diverse range of constituents every year around the globe.

In 1997, recognising the need for year-round campaign activity for HIV and AIDS, UNAIDS launched the first year-long World AIDS Campaign. Since then UNAIDS has coordinated the World AIDS Campaign as a loose partnership of UN agencies, governments and all sections of civil society campaigning around particular themes.

The international theme for World AIDS Day 2005 is **Stop AIDS. Keep/Make the Promise! Don't turn your back on AIDS!** Diakonia Council of Churches offers suggestions towards worship services to be held on or around World AIDS Day in the hope that they will encourage many churches to mark this day.



### **Why this theme?**

The World AIDS Campaign advocates for the fulfilment of the UN Declaration of Commitment on HIV and AIDS and subsequent policy commitments on AIDS under the theme "Stop AIDS. Keep the Promise." The Campaign aims to hold the world community accountable to the commitments they make, while at the same time highlighting the Declaration of Commitment on HIV and AIDS as an important tool for ensuring a comprehensive response to the epidemic.

The World AIDS Campaign also aims to ensure individuals are actively engaged in the response under the theme "Stop AIDS. Make the Promise."

### Why the declaration of Commitment on HIV and AIDS?

The agreement in 2001 by Heads of State and Representatives of Government to support the Declaration of Commitment on HIV and AIDS marked a milestone in the history of the AIDS epidemic. It sent a signal from governments that urgency would be needed in addressing the devastation of the global epidemic with leadership, honesty and action.

While nations around the world have made previous commitments to respond to HIV and AIDS within their own countries, this was the first time they gathered to recognise that AIDS was a global crisis requiring global action.

The Declaration set out specific commitments the international community will need to fulfil upon their return home – including prevention campaigns, reducing stigma, building health infrastructures, providing necessary resources and ensuring treatment, care and respect for people living with HIV or AIDS. In many cases, these commitments included specific deadlines, making the Declaration a powerful tool to guide and secure action, support and resources for all those fighting the epidemic, both within and outside government.

These historic commitments to action in support of a comprehensive AIDS response are not solely aimed at political leaders but at us all. Everyone has a role to play in responding to HIV and AIDS. We hope you will be inspired by these commitments and will support the World AIDS Campaign to ensure that everyone 'Keeps the Promise'. As Kofi Annan, UN Secretary-General, said at the Special Session, "All of us must recognise AIDS as our problem. All of us must make it our priority."

### Stop AIDS. Make the Promise.

Each of us can help stop the spread of HIV and reduce the impact of AIDS. You don't have to be a top scientist working on a cure to make a difference. Protecting yourself and others from HIV infection, welcoming someone living with HIV into your life or even just talking about HIV and AIDS can help. **Are you taking action?**



## **Liturgical Resources:**

- ✠ At all services say a few words remembering those affected by HIV and AIDS
- ✠ Light a special candle
- ✠ Place a red ribbon on the altar or in some other prominent place, or provide red ribbons for the congregation. The red ribbon is the international symbol of compassion for people affected by HIV and AIDS
- ✠ Choose hymns and prayers that are relevant to HIV and AIDS
- ✠ Have a special sermon on an AIDS-related topic
- ✠ Display posters about AIDS in your church, and have information available that people can take away with them
- ✠ Invite someone who is HIV-positive or has AIDS, or someone who is working in this field to address your congregation during a service
- ✠ Include information about AIDS programmes and resources in your church pew leaflet or on the notice board
- ✠ Develop an AIDS ministry in your parish - for ideas about this contact the Diakonia Council of Churches.

## **Bible Readings:**

- ✠ Luke 5: 12 - 16 - The compassion of Jesus toward the outcast leper.
- ✠ Luke 8: 40 - 56 – The suffering women and Jairus' daughter are healed.
- ✠ Luke 10: 25 - 37 - The parable of the good Samaritan.
- ✠ Luke 13:10-17 – Jesus heals a crippled woman on the Sabbath
- ✠ John 3: 16 – The love of God.
- ✠ John 20: 21 – The mission of Christians.
- ✠ 1 John 4: 8 – 21 – God is love.
- ✠ Psalm 103: 8 - 18 – God's love is wider and deeper than any sin.
- ✠ Lamentations 3: 17 - 24 - The Lord's unfailing hope and mercy.
- ✠ 2 Kings 5 - Naaman, a powerful man, was not spared from the disease of leprosy. Illness knows no boundaries.
- ✠ Psalm 85: 1 - 13 - God's promises to his people.
- ✠ Proverbs 31: 10-31 – The celebration of the good wife.
- ✠ Matthew 15:21-28 – The healing of the Canaanite woman.
- ✠ 1 Corinthians 13 – All our actions need to be based on love.

## **Prayers:**

Dear God,  
friends with AIDS slip through my fingers  
faster than grains of sand, and seemingly as many.

I can't hold them.

God, dear God,  
please catch them with your open hands,  
within your welcoming embrace,  
with your loving heart.

I wish I could be there for them.  
I pray they'll be there for me  
when I slip.  
You too, my God,  
Our God.

**Amen.**

Jesus, giver of life and hope, you knew the love of a human family  
and the warm companionship of your disciples;  
and though few of them remained with you at Calvary,  
you found even there the support of your friend and  
your mother and of unnamed women.

We pray today that those who live with HIV and AIDS  
may also be blessed with tender and loving companions,  
who will give them practical help in their times of need  
and offer them hope in their times of darkness.

May they find in us too an unseen source of strength  
as they and we are held together in your love.

**Amen.**

Loving God,  
As we hold before you a world confronted by AIDS,  
we pray in hope for your will to prevail:

Leader:               Where lives are short,  
Congregation:      May they yet be full.

L:                      When a cure is far off,  
C:                      May there yet be healing.

L:                   Where bodies are weak,  
C:                   May spirits yet be strong.

L:                   When silence is destructive,  
C:                   May there yet be courage to speak out.

L:                   Where judgements are hasty,  
C:                   May minds yet be open.

L:                   When reality is overwhelming,  
C:                   May there yet be response.

L:                   Where faith is tested,  
C:                   May we yet find you there.

In the name of Jesus.  
**Amen.**

Lord, help us to accept the challenge of HIV and AIDS:  
to protect the healthy, calm the fearful,  
to offer courage to those in pain,  
to embrace the dying as they flow into love's unendingness,  
to console the bereaved,  
to support all those who attempt to care for the sick and dying.  
**Amen.**

Gracious God,  
May we be bold in speaking about the spread of HIV,  
tender in caring for those affected  
and faithful in praying for a generation free from AIDS;  
that when Christ comes again  
He may find us, His worldwide church,  
bound together in love for one another and for Him.  
**Amen.**

Sometimes I feel discouraged, and think  
my work's in vain  
But then the Holy Spirit revives my soul  
again.  
There is a balm in Gilead to heal the  
wounded soul.  
**A Negro Spiritual.**

Dear God, we ask you to walk with us in our HIV and AIDS filled world.  
We pray expecting Your presence among us!

Be with all who live with the effects of this disease.  
Be with those who wait to die because they have no access to medication.  
Be with children who received HIV as a legacy from their parents.  
Be with orphans and families who have lost loved ones.  
Be with countries who have millions of citizens with HIV/AIDS.  
Be with all who are stigmatised and ignored because they have HIV or AIDS.  
Be with politicians and corporate executives who control access to affordable medications.  
Be with researchers and scientists who work to find a cure.  
Be with healthcare workers and caregivers who comfort and encourage.  
Be with all who have lost hope because of HIV and AIDS.

Lord, we hear the angel's song of peace!  
Fill the hearts of people around the world with good will  
so that together we can work for justice and healing  
for all who suffer from HIV and AIDS.

**Amen.**

God of enduring hope and vibrant life,  
be with us all as we live with HIV and AIDS.  
Help us struggle in love and anger  
toward a better world:  
where poverty is a word from history,  
global trade works to benefit us all,  
and our blood is forever free from HIV and AIDS.  
Without your grace such life is impossible,  
without our actions such hope is improbable,  
give us the vision to make such a world imaginable.  
Through Jesus

**Amen.**

### **Prayer of commitment and support**

Lord God, give us the spirit of courage, so we may be open in our concern for  
people living with HIV and AIDS,  
give us the spirit of challenge, that we may not accept silence and prejudice  
without question,  
give us the spirit of compassion that we may see the world through their eyes,  
give us the spirit of gentleness, that we may listen to those who cry out to us for  
understanding,  
give us the spirit of togetherness, that we may truly love one another as  
ourselves.

Lord God, with the help and guidance of your Holy Spirit, lead us forward, in the name of your Son, Jesus Christ, we pray.

**Amen.**

### **Commitment**

*All:* We reject all forms of discrimination and stigma,  
Because we believe in God,  
Who created the world in all its diversity and colour:  
HIV positive and negative alike.

We honour the dignity of all people,  
Because we believe in Jesus Christ,  
Who took upon himself the pain and suffering of the world:  
Carers and sufferers alike.

We speak and act with one prophetic voice,  
Because we believe in the Holy Spirit,  
Who summons us out of our complacency:  
Voiceless and influential alike.

And we call upon governments to honour their commitments of funds  
and services in the fight against HIV,  
As we stand as one with those who live in the shadow of HIV.  
For the eyes of the Lord are upon us all.

**Amen.**

### **Prayers of intercession**

*Leader:* God our loving Father, your son Jesus chose to be vulnerable in order to understand and identify himself with us. We are wounded in many ways and we implore you to heal us and make us healers with you, to help heal our broken world.

Lord in your mercy,

*All:* **Hear our prayer**

*Leader:* We pray for the leaders of the nations and for all faith leaders. Give them courage and strength to take a lead in working to prevent the further spread of HIV and to care for those affected.

Lord in your mercy,

*All:* **Hear our prayer**

*Leader:* We pray for families that are wounded or broken. Help them to bear one another's burdens and to reach out in healing others.

Lord in your mercy,

*All:* **Hear our prayer**

*Leader:* We pray for young people, in their vitality and idealism. Bless them with good friends to help them accept themselves in all their vulnerability and challenge them with high ideals.

Lord in your mercy,

*All:* **Hear our prayer**

*Leader:* We pray for those who are sick and in pain, especially those affected by HIV and AIDS. May they experience your love through each one of us; may they find meaning and purpose in their lives and inspire others who suffer.

Lord in your mercy,

*All:* **Hear our prayer**

*Leader:* We pray for all those who work for development and justice. May they not be discouraged as they struggle to create a healthier world.

Lord in your mercy,

*All:* **Hear our prayer**

*Leader:* Lord, we thank you that you have made all of us in your own image and likeness. Help us to be sensitive to one another and to build healthy and caring communities in your world. We ask this through Jesus Christ our Lord.

*All:* **Amen**

### **Benediction**

Go out into the world and take with you  
The hope of God our creator who in love  
Created a world where all would be whole  
and longs for that wholeness to be restored.  
The hope of Jesus who touched and ate with the broken  
And offered them healing as he offers us now.  
In the hope of the Spirit who inspires and guides and energises  
us in times of apathy and despair  
To work to bring all God's people into oneness and health.

**Amen.**

Christ has

No body now on earth but yours,

No hands but yours,

No feet but yours.

Yours are the eyes through which Christ's compassion looks out to the world,  
Yours are the feet with which he goes about doing good,  
Yours are the hands with which he blesses now.

The blessing of God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit rest and remain with you now and for ever more.

**Amen.**

### **Hymns:**

- ✠ We are one in the Spirit
- ✠ I, the Lord of Sea and Sky (Here I Am Lord)
- ✠ Brother (Sister) let me be Your Servant
- ✠ Be still and know that I am God
- ✠ Were you there when they crucified my Lord?
- ✠ When I needed a neighbour
- ✠ The Lord's my Shepherd
- ✠ Abide with me
- ✠ Amazing Grace
- ✠ There is a Redeemer
- ✠ O for a thousand tongues
- ✠ When I survey the Wondrous Cross
- ✠ For the healing of the nation.
- ✠ There is a balm of Gilead
- ✠ Lord of the dance

### **Sermon:**

#### **A Gethsemane moment – Peter Graystone, Christian Aid**

Then Jesus went with his disciples to a place called Gethsemane, and he said to them, 'Sit here while I go over there and pray.' He took Peter and the two sons of Zebedee along with him, and he began to be sorrowful and troubled. Then he said to them, 'My soul is overwhelmed with sorrow to the point of death. Stay here and keep watch with me.'

*(Matthew 26:36-38)*

I suspect that for many of us the facts and figures of the HIV and AIDS epidemic are daunting. Perhaps like Jesus in Gethsemane we will find our souls overwhelmed with sorrow.

How very much we would rather live in a world that HIV and AIDS had never entered. And from heaven I hear God's compassion echoing that. How very much I long for that world too. We may groan like Jesus, 'Must we drink this cup?' But we must. That is the world in which we find ourselves. This is the Gethsemane the world must pass through.

Many are simply asleep, like the disciples a stone's throw from Jesus, simply unaware or unconcerned about the relentless threat in parts of the world far from them. And in streets very close to them.

Others come armed, as soldiers were preparing to do to Jesus. Armed with hatred; armed with prejudice; armed with selfish desire to distance themselves; armed with the potential to make money from the difficulty in which people find themselves.

And there are others who come as angels, as Luke tells us happened in Gethsemane, bringing strength to the one who had become weighed down with human frailty.

But even with ministers from God to strengthen and to comfort, this is a crisis which the world must endure. It is a cup we must drink. And just as crucifixion lay ahead for Jesus before he was raised to life, so there is a journey that the world must go - through death - before this epidemic is at an end.

Christians have a genuine role to play in being God's ministers in this Gethsemane. The lesson of Gethsemane is that God does not expect us to do what is impossible, but he does call us to be faithful in what we can do.

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## **Service One:**

### **The Gathering Prayer:**

**We begin in silence. During the silence, a large red ribbon is processed through the worship area and placed on the altar.**

**Leader:** God who comes alongside and lives within, we thank you for the privilege of being together at this time and in this place.

**All:** **We thank you.**

**Leader:** We pray that your love will unite us into a community of grace and discovery.

Please cleanse from us anything that would sap our strength for togetherness. Free us from negative imaginations and the barriers that sometimes keep us apart. In this time refresh in us the dream of a better world and put before us new possibilities for service.

**All:** **Lord, hear us.**

**Leader:** Renew in us your compassion so that we may be a people with loving purposes. We come together to be your alleluia in a troubled world.

**All:** Amen

**Bible Readings:**

Old Testament: Jeremiah 29:4-14

New Testament: Luke 5: 12 – 13

**Voices of the unheard:**

**Leader:** Let us now hear the voices of our sisters and brothers who are living with HIV and AIDS.

*"I have AIDS...Today it is me, tomorrow it's someone else. If I am not kind, if I do not sympathise and get involved with my neighbours, what will happen to me when my turn comes?"*

*"To be alone and dying, yet to care for one's own HIV infected child is tragedy, the dimension of which few of us can truly comprehend."*

*"Like every other epidemic, AIDS develops in the cracks and crevices of society's inequalities..."*

*"The women tell us they see their husbands with the wives of men who have died of AIDS. And they ask what can we do? If we say no, they'll say: pack and go. If we do, where do we go to?"*

*"The children are lonely and sad without any family...I do not know how to comfort them. I tell them they cannot even rely on me, as I fear I am infected. I know I am asking them to grow up before their time, but I see no other alternative, if they are to survive."*

*"It is as if we are beginning a new life. Our past is so sad. We are not understood by society...we are not protected against anything. Widows are without families, without houses, without money. We become crazy. We aggravate people with our problems. We are the living dead."*

*"Through my and others personal experience I have learnt that many women suffer in silence...Now HIV has changed many aspects of our lives and humanity is facing a plague which requires that we reassess and reform some of our cultural and traditional values."*

## **For Reflection:**

*Guideline for Reflection (Jeremiah 29: 4 –14):*

Jeremiah is writing to the people who have been taken away from Jerusalem to live in exile in Babylon. He assures them that God has promised that their time in exile is limited (v10) and encourages them in the meantime to take a positive attitude to their new life in Babylon (v5-7). Then we hear God's wonderful promise of his continuing presence with them and of a future full of hope.

Many people living with HIV around the world continue to suffer rejection in their churches, mosques or temples, even though these are places where they should feel most confident of finding loving acceptance. Some of them have also had their hopes cruelly raised by religious groups promising 'a cure for AIDS'.

The 'prophets and diviners' of Jeremiah's day were equally destructive, crushing people's hopes or giving them false hopes that were bound to be dashed. But Jeremiah draws them back to God, emphasizing that in God's plans there's no place for harm.

## **HYMN**

### **An Act of Remembrance and Thanksgiving:**

**Leader:** God our Father, we thank you that you have made each one of us in your own image and given us gifts and talents with which to serve you. We thank you for those who lives we have shared and whom we remember this day/night. We thank you for the good we have experienced in them and for the blessing they have been to us. Give us faith to leave them in your care, confident in your promises.

**Leader:** We live in much darkness. We are often uncertain. We are sometimes afraid.

**All: In the darkness, we light a candle of hope.**  
*(First candle is lit.)*

**Leader:** We all have sorrows. We have known pain. Each of us carry special regrets.

**All: In our palm, we light a candle of forgiveness.**  
*(Second candle is lit.)*

**Leader:** We are sometimes lonely, and the world seems cold and hard.

**All:**     **In our loneliness, we light a candle of love.**  
*(Third candle is lit.)*

**Leader:** We have known awe, wonder, mystery and glimmerings of perfection in our imperfect world.

**All:**     **In our wonder, we light a candle of praise.**  
*(Fourth candle is lit.)*

**Leader:** May our separate lights become one flame, that together we may be nourished by its glow.

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## **Service Two:**

### **Liturgy on Being One Body**

“Lord, release the chains, set me free!”

C1 = complainer 1

C2 = complainer 2

P = pastor or liturgist

R1 = reader 1

R2 = reader 2

R3 = reader 3

### **Introductory Words**

P:     What you do to another, you do to yourself and to all of us. In the deepest sense, we are one person, a universal body.  
When we destroy another person, we also destroy something within ourselves, and as a consequence, something in humanity.  
But this does not mean that we humans are all alike. There is great diversity among us, in the same way that diversity exists within each and every one of us.

**Complaint:** C1 and 2: From the back of the sanctuary.

All:     “How long, O Lord? Will you forget me forever?”

C1:     “It is as though people avoid me, talk behind my back, they treat me like I’m different.”  
“They think of me as being a loser, I’m excluded.”

C2:     “I don’t dare tell anyone that I’m HIV positive, because I don’t know how others will react.”

C1: "I'm so sick and tired of all the questions! It's a human need to have intimacy; I have needs too, the desire to have children, the desire to have a husband."

C2: "Some people see only the virus, they don't see me!"

C1: "I'm so afraid of being rejected or disappointed. I don't dare to fall in love."

C2: "Why does it seem like God is angry when I try to do my best?"

C1: "I have searched for a God who loves me, who doesn't judge and who can help me to accept HIV and to be free from condemnation. I didn't find him in the church. It has been a lonesome search."

All: "How long, O Lord? Will you forget me forever?"

### **Confession of Participation in what is Constructive.**

From the chancel:

R1: We confess that we are a part of all that God has created and he saw that it was "very good," that we all have a part in the good and bear within ourselves a basic goodness.

We confess that all our being, also our physical body, our longings and desires are all a part of God's image within us.

We confess that we all have value, and that we have value because we are God's creation, because we live and exist.

### **SILENCE OR SONG**

### **Acknowledgment of Participation in what is Destructive.**

From either side of the front of the sanctuary:

R2: We acknowledge our part in creating divisions and placing some people on the outside.

We acknowledge our prejudices, that we fear what is foreign to us and that we contribute to people's feelings of isolation, being shunned and treated as though they were different.

We acknowledge that we are often more concerned about a person's status and their being different than we are about their inner resources, potential and common humanity.

We acknowledge that we often identify certain people or groups of people as being evil, and that we do not see that we are all a part of what is evil as well as what is good.

We acknowledge injustice in that the strongest, the healthiest and the wealthiest among us are often prioritised, receive the best and in that way receive even more.

Look upon us in mercy, forgive us, cleanse us and make us whole.

## **SILENCE OR SONG**

### **Absolution:**

P: You are loved, far more than you know – loved, forgiven and redeemed.  
And this love sustains your life. Your deepest identity IS love.

### **Scripture Reading**

Luke 13:10-17

### **Confession of Faith:**

We believe in a God who IS love; who created us in love  
who suffers when we suffer,  
and who is actively at work in the world for good.

We believe in a God who does not send disease or other suffering as punishment for sin.

We believe in Jesus Christ, who took upon himself our flesh and blood  
who reveals to us what God is like  
who put people above laws and regulations  
who cleanses us and sets us free to follow the way of love.

We believe in the notion that Jesus Christ can not be owned or controlled by anyone nor that he can be limited by laws and rules.

We believe in the Holy Spirit, the power who gives life  
the breath who gives life and transforms our bodies into a place  
where heaven and earth can meet.

We believe in a Spirit who does not remove us from our bodies,  
the earth and life, or who makes some people better believers than others.

We believe that we make up the church

and that together we are a colourful fellowship  
in this church no one is, per definition, placed outside  
in this church people find help to accept and love themselves and their  
neighbour.

We believe in a church that does not stigmatise, discriminate, exclude or  
condemn anyone.

We believe, God. Help our unbelief.

### **Meditation On The Text**

In Luke 13:10-17 we come face to face with a God who opposes the authorities  
and loosens the chains of people who are bound. It is a God who is not only  
active during business hours from 9 to 5, i.e. within a certain framework, but as  
a force that will not be confined or limited. God himself breaks the rules of  
Scripture because people and compassion are more important than laws. The  
intention of the law is more important than obedience to individual laws. God's  
nature is love, and the purpose behind his words and actions is to loosen bonds,  
to lift up the downtrodden, and to make people free; God heals and saves.

This episode and other central stories about Jesus can help remove notions of  
God characterised by aggression, revenge and punishment and instead point to  
the very core of the gospel – God's love for each and every one of us.

Christianity and the gospel have potential that at times appear to be totally  
untapped. They can be fantastic tools for our lives, they can set us free and  
cleans us from everything in ourselves, and our surroundings that suppress the  
individual. They do away with a fragmented view of humanity, which creates  
guilt and shame and which holds one down. It emphasises the importance of  
having love for oneself and for one's neighbour.

### **Intercessory Prayer**

God of all people, give us the strength and courage to recognize and work  
against every form of stigmatisation, exclusion and discrimination. Help us to  
work against prejudice, and give us the ability to recognise your presence in  
every person. In our hearts we lay before you those whom we know personally  
who experience what it is like to be placed on the outside.

God of love, reveal yourself to us and help us to witness to you in truth. Free us  
from the temptation to misuse you in order to take advantage of other people, or  
to be served rather than to serve. Help us to share the love you bring to us and  
to work against destructive notions of you.

God, the source of all life and vitality, help us to look after ourselves, our lives and each other. Give us courage and strength to oppose disparagement, discrimination and violation of women, and to put an end to the violence that occurs both within and outside of marriage. Help us always to care for those much less fortunate than ourselves, and to speak about HIV in a language characterised by respect, love, forgiveness and intimacy.

Triune God, make our congregations places for inclusive fellowship and diversity, where our variety of experiences may find recognition and the value of each individual find affirmation. Help us to be what we deep down already are: members of one and the same body. Enable us to see the individual ahead of laws, viruses or sickness. We pray for a church that can make life beautiful and possible for us all, that can be a welcoming committee for your healing powers in the world.

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**Reference List:**

⌘ Christian Aid. [www.christianaid.org](http://www.christianaid.org)

⌘ Ecumenical Advocacy Alliance. [www.e-alliance.ch](http://www.e-alliance.ch)