

***STOP AIDS.
Keep the Promise!***



'2006 marks the 25th anniversary of the identification of AIDS, 10 years since the introduction of antiretroviral therapy, and five years since UN member states unanimously adopted the 2001 "Declaration of Commitment on HIV/AIDS."



INTRODUCTION

If there is one thing that HIV/AIDS surely attacks, it is human life. With millions of people already dead, and millions of others either living with or personally affected by HIV/AIDS, the epidemic constitutes one of the most critical problems for our time. Beyond physical death, HIV/AIDS has also undertaken a severe attack on spiritual, psychological and economic life. Some may have suffered and died physically, but the tragedy is that the majority of families, communities and countries died internally and mentally when they lost hope for the future. The quality of life has been severely reduced for both the infected and the affected.

It is therefore important to remember that religious institutions in general, and churches in particular have very important roles to play in ministering to the spiritual needs of those affected and infected by HIV/AIDS; in fighting the spread of the disease from one person to the other; in mobilising care and treatment for those already infected; and in mitigating the effects of the disease on the families, communities and nations that have been affected.

LITURGICAL SUGGESTIONS

- Provide red ribbons for the congregation – the red ribbon is the international symbol of compassion for people affected by HIV/AIDS.
- Place a red ribbon on the alter or in some other prominent place.
- Light a special candle.
- Have a special sermon on an AIDS related topic.
- Choose relevant hymns and prayers.
- Display posters about AIDS in your church and have information available that people can take away.
- Invite a person living with AIDS or someone who is HIV positive or someone who is working in this field e.g. a caregiver to address your congregation during a service.
- Visit a hospice or a related centre that cares for people or children affected and infected with HIV.
- Visit child-headed households as a build up to the service.
- Include information on AIDS programmes and resources in your

- pew leaflet or on the notice board.
- Develop an AIDS ministry in your parish.

BIBLE READINGS

- ✠ Luke 5: 12 - 16 (Jesus' compassion towards 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).

CALL TO WORSHIP

We gather for worship at the beginning of Advent - the time of promise;
the promise of hope,
the promise of life,
the promise of God's commitment to us.

The fulfillment of the promise is Jesus, the Christ incarnate.
He gave voice to the voiceless,
he touched the untouchable,
he gives life to the dying.

We worship the God who is with us all of our lives.

OR

Leader: To you, O Lord, I offer my prayer;
ALL: In You, my God, I put my trust.

Leader: Teach me your ways, O Lord;
ALL: In You, my God, I put my trust.
Leader: Teach me to live according to your truth,
ALL: In You, my God, I put my trust.
Leader: May goodness and honesty preserve me,
ALL: Because I trust in you.

OR

Surely God is my salvation
I will trust and I will not be afraid
For the Lord God is my strength and might
God has become my salvation (Isaiah 12:2)

OR

Leader: I am because we are.
ALL: We are because I am.
Leader: No person is an island.
ALL: Our god is the triune God, the God with us.

OR

In the power of the creative Spirit
We come together to light a candle of hope
In the hearts of all people
Who are faced with hopeless situations.
We are God's instruments to bring hope.

AMEN

OR

Leader: In the beginning was the Word.
ALL: And the word became flesh.
Leader: The Word was with God; and the Word was God.
ALL: And the word became flesh.
Leader: All things were made through the Word; nothing was made
without him.
ALL: And the word became flesh.

Leader: In the Word was life; life which was the light for humankind.

ALL: And the word became flesh.

Leader: God loved the world so much.

ALL: That the word became flesh.

HYMN/SONG

PRAYER

Leader: We bless you, God,
for your passion in creating this world
and your compassion in becoming part of its fabric.
flesh of our flesh, bone of our bone in Jesus.

ALL: We bless you, God.

Leader: for our own creating –
the womb that bore us,
the people who parented us,
the communities that raised us,
the friends and lovers who cherish us.

ALL: We bless you, God.

Leader: For a gospel rooted in this life and this history,
for a faith which binds word to action,
and for a Church which, despite its tensions,
still seeks to embrace all your children.

PRAYERS OF CONFESSION

Our God, we would confess those times when we have failed you
And failed to live as the Gospel requires.

Since the time of creation you have made us one for another,
forgive us that we have not loved as we should.

The life of Jesus showed us that your desire is to be with us,
forgive us that we have so little desire to be with you.

The ministry of Jesus was one where he touched all,
Even those who were considered 'unclean',
forgive us that there are still some we fear to touch.

The teaching of Jesus spoke of loving our neighbour as ourselves,
forgive us that we have no care for the welfare of others.

Just as we confess as individuals,
We acknowledge that we are part of those bigger institutions,
That also fail to reflect the kingdom.
As church, the body of Christ, we have not lived supportively
With those infected and affected by HIV/AIDS.

forgive us our failure.

As civil society we have tried to ignore the pain
Of those infected and affected by HIV/AIDS.

forgive us our weakness.

As government we have failed to support our citizens
Infected and affected by HIV/AIDS.

forgive us our failure.

Let our confession be more than words, let it be that true change of heart
that you so desire, let our lives reflect your forgiveness.

AMEN

OR

We confess that:

We are a church infected and affected by HIV/AIDS.

We are a church suffering from opportunistic infections.

We are a church living and dying with HIV/AIDS.

We are a church suffering from stigma and discrimination.

Heal us Lord. Bind our wounds

We bring our hearts to you for healing.

We bring our hearts to you for your healing.

We bring our minds to you for our healing.

We bring our broken hearts and families for healing.

Heal us Lord. Bind our wounds and have mercy on us.

Heal us Lord with your resurrection.

Cause us to rise from fear and hopelessness.

Cause us to rise into your resurrection hope.

Heal us and fill us with your Spirit of power and life.

AMEN

PRAYERS OF HOPE AND PROMISE

Our God we come to worship you,
For you have promised never to leave us nor forsake us.
You have promised to be with us until the end of the earth.
You have promised us life in all its fullness,
And we have been surprised because fullness has meant life with all its
shades of experience.

We rejoice in those things which bring gladness to our hearts,
And we bear those things which cause us grief,
And we remember that you are the God who has transformed the
moment of Christ's death,
Into the moment of new life for us all.
This is mystery indeed and we bow before it.

It is because you have fulfilled your promises to us,
That we are a people of hope.
The darkness of despair has never overcome you,
And it will not overcome us,
For we are children of the living God,
Light of the world.

We would seek to fulfill the call of scripture,
And 'let our light so shine before all,
That they may see our good works and give glory to our God'.
We would infect and affect others with the sweet contagion of hope,
So that life might be lived to its full and to the glory of God.

AMEN

SERMON/REFLECTION

Leader: We will now have two minutes silence, during which time we
remember all those living with or affected by HIV/AIDS.

CHORUS

Be still and know that I am God

The scripture passage invites us to reflect on the 'hidden' afflictions - the things we either do not see or choose not to see. It is our response to these that marks us out as Christ followers. Those afflicted are noticed by God, they are not to be dismissed and to dismiss them is for us to dismiss God. Our faith is only real if our lives display the grace and compassion of the incarnate Christ.

Things to note during reflection:

- who cannot see?
- who chooses not to see?
- why do we prefer not to see?
- do we understand the consequences of not seeing? (on a number of levels)

(As a visual aid, it might be useful to prepare an exhibition of 'hidden' things, maybe an interactive stand where graphics or information can only be seen if people uncover them; maybe a tableau behind a net curtain with a fan strategically placed so that every now and again it is blown to the side to 'reveal' what is behind)

PRAYERS OF INTERCESSION

Use of Taize music as response to intercessions

(O Lord hear my prayer, O Lord hear my prayer, when I call answer me.

O Lord hear my prayer, O Lord hear my prayer, come and listen to me)

God of life we come to you seeking life

For those whose lives face change because of this virus.

Grant them courage and wisdom to make the choices that promise life.

Response

God of strength we come to you seeking strength

For those who care for those living with the virus.

Grant them hope and compassion that their ministry of care will make life worth living.

Response

God of knowledge we come to you seeking knowledge
For those who are looking for a cure for this disease.
Grant them perseverance and tenacity that their work will find fruition.

Response

God of vision we come to you seeking vision
For the governments of the world.
Grant them a creative spirit that they may seek the health of their peoples.

Response

God of grace we come to you seeking grace
For a world that doesn't care.
Grant to us all a heart that responds to the needs that are around us so that your touch may be felt.

Response

AMEN

OR

Leader: God of mercy, we recognise that the church of Jesus Christ has AIDS,

ALL: God of love, we recognise you as the one who heals us.

Leader: God our creator, we acknowledge the various ways that you heal your church.

ALL: God our wisdom, open our eyes to see your many ways of healing.

Leader: God of compassion, we see you taking time for the least of the society to bring them healing.

ALL: God our teacher, give us the courage to follow your

footsteps and bring healing to all people in our society.
Leader: We seek your forgiveness where we have failed you.
**ALL: We receive your forgiveness as we go out to bring healing
to your people through the power of the Holy Spirit.
In Jesus' name.**

AMEN

A LITANY ON THE BEATITUDES

Blessed are those aware of their spiritual needs,
for the commonwealth of Heaven belongs to them.

Bless people with HIV/AIDS,
And all who face life-threatening illnesses,
with a vision of their eternal worth.

Blessed are those who mourn,
for God will comfort them.

Bless those who grieve in the AIDS crisis.
Comfort partners, parents, friends, families
and those who are infected with HIV.

Blessed are the meek, for they will receive what God has promised.

Bless those who are humbled by a positive HIV test
with a fresh appreciation for their bodies,
their lives and for the beauty of this world.

Blessed are those whose greatest desire is to do what God requires,
for God will satisfy them fully.

Bless those who seek justice for people living with HIV/AIDS.

Blessed are children who have to assume the role of parents.

Grant them all that is needed in this difficult situation.

Blessed are those who are merciful to others,
for God will be merciful to them.

Bless all who seek cures and treatments.

Bless all who offer care.

Bless loved ones who stand alongside those who are infected,

that they may be strengthened by your Spirit.

Blessed are the pure in heart, for they will see God.

Bless all who seek to find you in their lives.

May they find your Spirit within themselves,

May they see you in the faces of those who love them,

May they feel your healing touch in those who hold them.

Blessed are those who work for peace,

for they will be called God's children.

Bless all who work to reconcile church and society,

with those who are rejected and isolated because of HIV/AIDS.

AMEN

CLOSING PRAYERS

Loving God, you send us from this place and
we go to be your presence in this world.

We carry with us your promises,

the promise of presence,

the promise of life,

the promise of your love.

Let these promises touch and guide our lives

that we may be called children of the living God.

AMEN



Reference list:

1. Statement on Cover: The Ecumenical Advocacy Alliance, Geneva, Switzerland.
2. A Handbook on HIV/AIDS Sensitive Sermon Guidelines and Liturgy
3. Christian Aid - www.christianaid.org.uk

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