

Stop AIDS. Keep the Promise.



Worship Service for World AIDS Day 2009

Introduction

Every 15 seconds someone in the world dies of AIDS-related illnesses, but even more often a person living with HIV is discriminated against, judged, excluded, whispered about, fired from their job, arrested, beaten, or thrown out of their house. In 2009 and 2010, World AIDS Day will focus on HIV and human rights. As Christians, these are precious moments for us to reflect on HIV and our belief that all people are created in God's image. While we work to promote and protect the human rights of people living with or affected by HIV, or those who are vulnerable to infection, we must also recognize and take action on the spiritual dimension that call's us to work for justice and treat all as our sisters and brothers.

Preparing the Service

You are encouraged to use this order of worship on World AIDS Day – Tuesday, 1 December 2009. It may also be used at a service on the Saturday or Sunday before or after World AIDS Day.

The only special item needed for this service is the branch of a tree with leaves on it for the pastor/priest/leader to use throughout the service.

This service can be downloaded from <http://www.e-alliance.ch/en/s/hiv aids/world-aids-day/> to make it easier for you to adapt it for your own context. It is also available through this link in English, French, Spanish and German, along with other resources for World AIDS Day.

Credits

This liturgy was written by the Rev. Terry MacArthur.

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Universal Access and Human Rights

Musical Preparation

Greeting

The leader of the worship holds up a branch.

Leader: A righteous branch is springing up,

People: *surely coming,*

Leader: fulfilling the promise,

People: *so all living with HIV have access to health care and live in safety.*

Leader: The days are surely coming.

People: *Surely.*

Leader: And this is the name by which they shall be known:

People: *The Lord is our righteousness.*

Leader: We worship God, faithful, sure,

People: *coming with hope,
dwelling with us in love,
executing justice and righteousness in the land.*

adapted from Jeremiah 33: 14-16

Hymn

Suggestions: "Hail to the Lord's anointed" or "O Come, O Come Emmanuel" or "Come, thou long-expected Jesus" or "Hark, the glad sound"

Old Testament Reading

Jeremiah 33: 14-16

The days are surely coming, says the LORD, when I will fulfill the promise I made to the house of Israel and the house of Judah. In those days and at that time I will cause a righteous Branch to spring up for David; and he shall execute justice and righteousness in the land. In those days Judah will be saved and Jerusalem will live in safety. And this is the name by which it will be called: "The LORD is our righteousness."

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Psalm 25:1-6

The leader reads the phrase from the Psalm. The people respond. And other readers speak the "I lift up..." parts.

Leader: To you, O LORD,

People: *I lift up my soul.*

Reader: I lift up Winnie from Zambia. Her mother died of AIDS-related illness when she was seven. She was abandoned for some time by her relatives. Hurt, unsure, struggling, she said: "I would like to be treated well; to feel loved and valued and to go back to school."

Leader: O my God, in you I trust;

People: *Do not let me be put to shame.*

Reader: I lift up the woman in Russia, not daring to give her name, fearing at every moment that someone will discover her secret so she loses her job.

Leader: Do not let my enemies exult over me.

People: *Do not let those who wait for you be put to shame.*

Reader: I lift up Mary from the Kakuma refugee camp in Kenya. She was raped and afterwards unable to find medical care. The camp is full of people living with HIV but she is afraid to take the test. She defends herself, "I have no friends. No one talks to me and the worst thing is that no one, no one wants to hold my baby."

Leader: Let them be ashamed who are wantonly treacherous.

People: *Make me to know your ways, O LORD; teach me your paths.*

Reader: I lift up people living with HIV who are evicted from their homes in Borei Keila, Cambodia and forced to live in horrible conditions in what has become known as an AIDS colony.

Leader: Lead me in your truth, and teach me.

People: *For you are the God of my salvation; for you I wait all day long.*

Reader: I lift up Steve Harvey, head of Jamaica AIDS Support, a group that works with gay and bisexual people affected by HIV. He was kidnapped and killed when it became known that he was gay.

Leader: Be mindful of your mercy, O LORD, and of your steadfast love,

People: *For they have been from of old.*

Reader: I lift up the widow from Washington, DC, whose husband died of AIDS-related illness contracted through injecting drug use. She has hepatitis C due to unsafe needles. She pleads: "Safe, affordable, low barrier/no barrier access to needles, and treatment would save lives, and money."

Leader: Do not remember the sins of my youth or my transgressions;

People: *According to your steadfast love remember me, for your goodness' sake, O LORD!*

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The leader takes the branch and lifts it as a kind of silent witness. The leader looks at the people while asking the questions

Leader: What righteous branch is God raising up to confront the wantonly treacherous, to spare the targeted from shame?
What righteous branch is God bringing forth in our midst, so people living with HIV can live in safety?
What righteous branch is God growing in you?

Silence

Prayer

Leader: Let us pray:

Universal God,
God of everything and everyone,
leaving nothing and no one outside your love,
spring up branches of righteousness
which shelter the least and listen to the silenced,
which reach the forgotten and gather the unwanted
so that all under your care, all will live in safety,
through Jesus Christ. *Amen.*

Sung Acclamation

Suggestions: "Ososo, ososo" from Korea or "Esbo hae probhu" from Bangladesh or "Dans nos obscurité" from Taizé or the first verse of "O Come, O Come, Emmanuel".

Epistle Reading

1 Thessalonians 3: 9-13

How can we thank God enough for you in return for all the joy that we feel before our God because of you? Night and day we pray most earnestly that we may see you face to face and restore whatever is lacking in your faith. Now may our God and Father himself and our Lord Jesus direct our way to you. And may the Lord make you increase and abound in love for one another and for all, just as we abound in love for you. And may he so strengthen your hearts in holiness that you may be blameless before our God and Father at the coming of our Lord Jesus with all his saints.

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Alleluia

Gospel Reading

Luke 21:25-36

“There will be signs in the sun, the moon, and the stars, and on the earth distress among nations confused by the roaring of the sea and the waves. People will faint from fear and foreboding of what is coming upon the world, for the powers of the heavens will be shaken. Then they will see 'the Son of Man coming in a cloud' with power and great glory. Now when these things begin to take place, stand up and raise your heads, because your redemption is drawing near.” Then he told them a parable: “Look at the fig tree and all the trees; as soon as they sprout leaves you can see for yourselves and know that summer is already near. So also, when you see these things taking place, you know that the kingdom of God is near. Truly I tell you, this generation will not pass away until all things have taken place. Heaven and earth will pass away, but my words will not pass away. “Be on guard so that your hearts are not weighed down with dissipation and drunkenness and the worries of this life, and that day catch you unexpectedly, like a trap. For it will come upon all who live on the face of the whole earth. Be alert at all times, praying that you may have the strength to escape all these things that will take place, and to stand before the Son of Man.”

Sermon

Hymn

Suggestions: Another one of the hymns suggested for the opening.

Affirmation

The branch is passed through the congregation while the following affirmation is recited. This is better if the leader says a few words and the people repeat it, than if they read it out of the worship order of service. People are invited to stand for this. The leader should try and find a strong rhythm between the call and the response by the people.

I am
somebody.

I have the right to live.

I may be HIV positive,
but I have the right
to essential medicine.

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I may be a prostitute,
or a drug addict,
but I am
accepted by God.

I may be an infected single mother,
but I have a right
to treatment.

I am
God's child.

I may be poor,
but I have a right
to healthy food
and clean water.

I maybe be different from you,
but I have a right
to be safe.

I may be dying,
but I have a right
to receive care
and support.

I am
God's child.

I can raise my head.

I can work for justice.

I may be
without my legs,
but in Christ,
I can stand tall,
because my redemption is near.

I am
somebody.

We are all God's children.
We all have a right to live.

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Prayers of Intercession

Prayer

Branch of Righteousness
surprise the world with a purity that allows being touched by a hemorrhaging woman,
rather than a purity which protects itself from others.

Surprise the world with a holiness that can affirm the prostitute who washed your feet with her hair,
rather than a holiness which does not associate with those who don't follow the standards of the community.

Surprise the world with a goodness that is able to feed the hungry on a hillside,
rather than the goodness which accuses others of not taking care and judging their misdeeds.

Surprise the world with a spirituality which affirms the praying penitent,
rather than the religious leader thanking you for his favored status.

Surprise the world with a gesture which opens your table to all who would come,
rather than a law which declares some unclean and unfit.

Branch of Righteousness, surprise your world.
Show us the leaves which tell us that your reign is at hand,
so all your people can stand tall,
and raise their heads
because your redemption is drawing near. *Amen.*

Lord's Prayer

Offering

Hymn

Suggestions: "O Lord, how shall I meet you" or "All glory, laud, and honor"

During the hymn the branches are waved before or around the congregation.

Benediction

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