



# Ecumenical Advocacy Alliance

## Worship Service for World AIDS Day 2014

### Words of Welcome

Welcome to our World AIDS Day service. This is a time we remember the people we have lost, give thanks for the progress we have made and commit ourselves anew to ensuring that no one is left behind.

Much has been achieved since AIDS was first identified over three decades ago. Global infection rates have begun to decline, fewer babies are being born with HIV and 11.7 million people in low- and middle-income countries are now on life-saving anti-retroviral medicines.

But there is much more to be done.

Even though new HIV infections have dropped by 38% since 2001, 2.1 million people were newly infected in 2013. There are still 22 million people who are not accessing life-saving treatment, including 2 million children. And people living with or vulnerable to HIV continue to face stigma and discrimination, which thwart prevention and treatment efforts and deny them access to comprehensive care and support.

If we are to see a day when there are zero AIDS-related deaths, zero new HIV infections and zero discrimination we must work together to ensure that the practical efforts, political will and financial commitments continue. As we give thanks for what has been achieved, we commit ourselves anew to doing all we can to make sure no one is left behind.

### Call to Worship

*The service opens with the lighting of the candle of hope in an Advent wreath. If your tradition doesn't include using an Advent wreath, you can light a single candle at the front. Note, other candles are used later in the service.*

Leader: Hope is a light given by God at the beginning of creation.  
People: Hope is the gift of God.  
Leader: Hope is a light given by God in the teaching of the prophets.  
People: Hope is the gift of God revealed in the life of Christ.

Leader: Hope is a light given by God, the Son of God, the Son of Mary.

*Light the candle.*

Leader: Let us pray:

People: Source of light, shine in our lives and in your world with your renewing hope. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen.

*Written by The Rev. Mary Whitson, Presbyterian World  
Service & Development, Canada*

**Scripture:** *The Parable of the Mustard Seed* Mark 4:30-31

### **Congregational Liturgy**

**All: What will it take, O God...**

*Left:* for us to see a day of no more AIDS-related deaths, no more new HIV infections and no more discrimination in the land of the living?

**All: What will it take, O God...**

*Right:* for change to come in our community, in our lives?

**All: What will it take, O God...**

*Left:* for the scattered to be gathered that all may praise and dance together?

**All: What will it take, O God...**

*Right:* for us to see the end of AIDS?

**All: What will it take, O God...**

*Left:* for us, your church, to be free from ignorance and fear?

**All: What will it take, O God...**

*Right:* for us to recognize your Word become flesh and living among us with HIV?

**All: What will it take, O God, for the dance to begin and the deaths to end?**

**All: Spirit of the Living God (*sung*)**

Spirit of the living God, fall afresh on me;

Spirit of the living God, fall afresh on me.

Melt me, mold me, fill me, use me.

Spirit of the living God, fall afresh on me.

Spirit of the living God, move among us all;

make us one in heart and mind, make us one in love:

humble, caring, selfless, sharing.

Spirit of the living God, fill our lives with love.

*Daniel Iverson, 1926*

Leader: We are the Body of Christ

**All: *The Body of Christ, living with HIV***

Leader: If we choose, we can make a difference

**All: *If we choose, we can help bring newness, hope and peace***

Leader: In our homes, in our church, in our community, in our nation, in our world

**All: *In our bodies, in our minds, in our spirits***

Leader: Our sisters and brothers, our parents and children are infected with HIV

**All: *We are living and dying with AIDS***

Leader: If we choose, the blockages to healing can be removed

**All: *We choose compassion. We choose to respond***

Leader: Will you respond with your money, with your time, with your love?

**All: *We are the Body of Christ. We choose to respond until the day of the last one:***

- ***the day of the last new HIV infection and the last child born with HIV;***
- ***the day of the last time that someone is stigmatized or bullied because of HIV and AIDS;***
- ***the day of the last time that someone dies from this disease.***

***We pray and act for the day of the last one!***

### **Candle Lighting**

*These candles can be lit around the sanctuary – or at the front, surrounding the Advent wreath. Invite one person to light all the candles while the liturgist reads the text or have four different people to each light a candle. This Candle Lighting reflection was prepared by Melany Adonis, Dr. Koos van der Vyfer and Aneleh Fourie-Le Roux for the Christian AIDS Bureau of Southern Africa Candlelight Memorial Service 2014.*

#### *First Candle*

**Reader:** As we are reminded of the HIV epidemic that has devastated so many lives across the world, Lord, we know that we must persevere and keep the light on HIV. As we do this, we are also reminded that you are our God. You are the Almighty God, the resurrected Christ, the loving Father and the ever-present Holy Spirit. In the midst

of this crisis, we turn to you and light this candle to remind us that our Hope is in You.

*Second Candle*

**Reader:** We light the second candle in remembrance of the millions of people who have died of AIDS-related conditions over the last few decades. We especially remember those who have died in our midst - our fathers and mothers, brothers and sisters, sons and daughters, friends, colleagues, employees and neighbors. In many cases we might not even have known the cause of their death.

*Third Candle*

**Reader:** We light the third candle for the 35 million people in our world who are living with HIV. We specifically also light this candle for those of us in this congregation and this community who are living with HIV, and for their loved ones.

*Fourth Candle*

**Reader:** We light the fourth candle – to keep the light on HIV, especially for those of us who have become weary of the topic. Even more so for those of us who still think that HIV is not the concern of the faith community. Let us continue to live life and work to bringing hope and reconciliation in a world with HIV.

*Let us pray...*

Loving and Caring God,  
    who never becomes weary and continues to support us:  
We are a broken world –  
    infected and affected by HIV  
We are  
    sad as we remember loved ones who have passed on,  
    often powerless when we think of the virus,  
    angry at systems which continue to keep people powerless and  
    vulnerable  
Bless us  
    and strengthen us  
    in order to continue the journey..  
Lead us  
    to experience resurrection and new life.

**AMEN**

**Hymn:** Kyrie Eleison

**Reflection: Towards The Zeros**

Religious Leaders gathered on the eve of the International AIDS Conference in Melbourne, Australia were encouraged by Luiz Loures, the UNAIDS deputy executive director of program, that the complete response to the epidemic won't be possible without the continuing involvement of faith-based groups.

"We have the tools. We have the science that we need. Yet there is no way to treat people if they have no access to care because they are afraid, or because they are women, or because they are a migrant, or because they need to hide to survive," Loures said.

The Parable of the Mustard Seed reminds us how small seeds can become massive trees, that small actions can have huge impacts.

It is time for us to join our actions together so that we do not lose momentum in the fight against AIDS. It is time for us to take seriously what it will take to achieve the three zeros: zero AIDS-related deaths, zero new HIV infections and zero discrimination.

Listen to these voices, these words of wisdom and hope, from scripture and people of faith.

**Voice One:** The first reaction of many who find out that they are HIV positive today is worry and despair: Am I going to have access to treatment? Is my family or community going to continue to support me and welcome me?

For people living with and affected by HIV, a 'savior' can seem a distant or unrealistic notion. Yet, we are to remember God's saving power and love. HIV and AIDS may remain a taboo in some communities today, but God can bring restoration and hope in the most unlikely of places and through the most unlikely of people.

Therefore, let all of us - infected and affected – pray that God's light will shine on us and fill our hearts with his spirit so that we can be messengers of hope and love, believing that with God all things are possible, and doing all we can to ensure that all people have access to HIV prevention services and information, to HIV medicines, and to the unconditional care and support that they need.

*Dr Asomba Tobias is CEO of the Christian Community Health Care Foundation (COHECF), a not for profit organization based in the Cameroon.*

**Scripture:** Luke 1:39-45

**Voice Two:** Out of perplexity, Mary hurriedly left Galilee as she was a virgin yet pregnant. She was afraid that she would be rejected by her neighbors, relatives and friends if they knew her condition. With great gloominess she visited Elizabeth who, inspired by the Holy Spirit, accepted Mary as Blessed. As such, Mary was assured that God was with her and was given strength to face whatever was to come.

Elizabeth's reaction gives us an example of how to respond to HIV today. Women who are infected are all too often rejected, tortured and excluded from society. In turn, whole families are shunned and broken apart. In the face of this, we need to be like Elizabeth. We need to help create a warm and accommodating

environment where everyone can experience love, compassion and acceptance that empowers them to live life to the full.

In turn, this acceptance will help build relationships whereby we are reconciled and restored with all to realize the reign of God.

*Beryl Logan coordinates the HIV and AIDS Desk of the United Evangelical Lutheran Churches in India, a communion of 11 Lutheran churches.*

**Scripture:** Luke 18:1-8

This passage introduces two different people: the powerful judge and the powerless widow.

There are many stories in the Bible that contrast a seemingly powerless person with one who appears to be very powerful.

But in this story the widow is not really powerless for she possesses a strong will and a brave heart. She is not easily discouraged by a powerful opponent and she believes in her cause because she is fighting for justice.

Both these characteristics have to come together as well if we want to fight against HIV.

As people of faith we believe that it is just to fight against discrimination — to fight for a just sharing of resources so that all people wherever they happen to live on this globe have the same access to prevention, care and treatment. This conviction should also give us the courage to stand up and persistently approach those who oppose just solutions, whether in churches, industry or government.

Jesus wanted to teach his disciples an important lesson about God and about the persistence of prayer. He said: if even an unjust judge will listen to persistent interventions, how much more will God listen to you.

This is true. I wonder how many people pray fervently day and night at this time because they mourn about loved ones who died and because they are asking God when all this suffering will end.

When we pray we are assured that God will listen. Are we not seeing signs that the tide might be finally turning, that churches are waking up, that global solidarity is increasing and that AIDS will finally be overcome?

We are not there yet, we have to continue to pray and to work hand in hand together with churches, other organizations, and all people of good will.

Let us ask for God's blessings for our work.

*By Dr. Christoph Benn from Worship Resources for World AIDS Day, The Ecumenical Advocacy Alliance.*

## **Prayers of Intercession**

God of Hope

All of us are affected by HIV and AIDS.

At this time of Advent Hope,  
As we prepare for the coming of your Son into this world  
We give thanks for signs of hope.  
For growing understanding  
For medical advances  
For changing attitudes and behaviour  
For greater awareness and concern in your church.  
**All: Lord hear us, Lord graciously hear us**

God of Unity  
Bind us together with strong ties of love  
That all churches will be places where everyone can find acceptance,  
May our churches provide a welcome for all affected by HIV and AIDS.  
May they be places where care is given and received,  
Especially for affected children and youth,  
Where stories are told and heard,  
Where fear is overcome by love,  
Where you are to be found.  
**All: Lord hear us, Lord graciously hear us**

God of Promise  
The end of AIDS is in sight!  
Give us courage to run the race set before us.  
We look to you in prayer and in action  
For a day when all will have access to education and information  
For a day when all who need it can get affordable and good quality treatment  
For a day when all are accepted, included and given care and support  
Let us shed our cynicism, denial, selfishness and laziness.  
May we surprise you, as you surprise us!  
**All: Lord hear us, Lord graciously hear us**

### **Benediction**

May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, so that you may abound in hope by the power of the Holy Spirit. May the God of hope work through us so that zero AIDS-related deaths, zero new HIV infections and zero discrimination will become reality.

*Prepared by Karen Plater, Presbyterian World Service and Development (Canada),  
using EAA resources and other elements as credited.  
Ecumenical Advocacy Alliance [www.e-alliance.ch](http://www.e-alliance.ch)*