

A red cloth is draped over a dark, reflective surface. Several lit tealight candles are scattered around, creating a warm, glowing effect. The background is dark, and the overall mood is solemn and reflective.

Communities make a difference

World AIDS Day 2019
Order of service



World Council
of Churches

Order of Service for World AIDS Day 2019

Communities make a difference

Before the service begins, place a red ribbon on a large cross. Then distribute red ribbons and small pieces of paper to each congregation member as they enter the worship space.

Words of Welcome

Welcome to our World AIDS Day service. World AIDS Day is commemorated on the 1st of December each year to remind us that HIV has not gone away. This is a time we remember the people we have lost, we give thanks for the progress we have made and commit ourselves anew to ensuring that no one is left behind. The theme for this year World AIDS Day is **"Communities make the difference"**. The primary objective behind the selection of this theme by the United Nations is to give an opportunity to recognize the essential role that communities play in society for raising awareness about HIV and to encourage communities to continue advocacy for quality, compassionate HIV diagnosis, care and treatment, playing a role at international, regional, national and local levels. Communities are key in the HIV and AIDS response. Communities of faith are a vital and essential component of this response.

This year we want to pray for those faith communities that have been and are making a difference supporting, loving, caring and accompanying people living with HIV and AIDS, and their families. Our prayers are with those faith communities that are engaged in prevention activities with key population and vulnerable groups, fighting stigma and discrimination against our sisters and brothers at risk of HIV infection or living with HIV and sharing age appropriate information about the virus.

What do you know about HIV?

HIV is a virus that spreads through certain body fluids that attacks the body's immune system. The virus damages the immune system making it more difficult for the body to fight off infections. Without treatment, opportunistic infections or cancers take advantage of a very weak immune system and signal that the person has AIDS.

No effective cure currently exists, but with proper medical care, HIV can be controlled. The medicine used to treat HIV is called antiretroviral therapy or ART. If people with HIV take ART as prescribed, their viral load (amount of HIV in their blood) can become undetectable. If the viral load stays undetectable, people with HIV can live long, healthy lives and have effectively no risk of transmitting HIV to others.

The global HIV statistics tell us that:

- 37.9 million people globally are living with HIV. About 8.1 million of these people do not know that they are living with HIV.
- 23.3 million people are accessing antiretroviral therapy, the life-saving medicines that help people with HIV to live a healthy life. Everyone living with HIV has the right to access to HIV services, treatment, care and support! Disparities in accessing treatment show that HIV is a justice issue: last year, 62% of adults aged 15 years and older living with HIV had access to treatment. However, children are still lagging behind. Only 54% of children aged 0–14 years living with HIV are on treatment. In 2018, 68% of female adults aged 15 years and older had access to treatment; but just 55% of male adults aged 15 years and older had access.
- 1.7 million people became newly infected with HIV last year. Showing that increased, evidence-based prevention activities are urgently needed!
- 770 000 people died from AIDS-related illnesses in 2018. In spite of the scientific progress, the large funding, the activists' mobilization and the increased access to HIV drugs, too many people are suffering and dying each year from HIV infection.
- 74.9 million people have become infected with HIV since the start of the epidemic.
- 32.0 million people have died from AIDS-related illnesses since the start of the epidemic.

HIV is a virus. It is not a moral condition.

What is our faith community doing to spread awareness and accurate information about HIV? What is our faith community doing to support, care, love and accompany people living with HIV and AIDS, their families and support systems?

On the occasion of this year World AIDS Day, let us pray that God gives us all the strength, the willingness and the compassion to become a faith community that keeps people at the center, and leaves no one behind in the HIV epidemic. Faith communities must be knowledgeable about HIV and the ways to support, care, love and accompany people living with HIV and AIDS, their families and support systems. Faith communities must welcome people living with HIV as valuable and active members. Let us pray to become a faith community that makes a difference in responding to HIV.

Call to Worship

THE SERVICE OPENS WITH THE LIGHTING OF CANDLES OF HOPE AND MUSIC

GRACIOUS LOVING GOD,

Today we pray for all communities that are making a difference to end the HIV epidemic.

We pray that our own faith community becomes an agent of change.

We give thanks for the incredible work of faith communities, faith-based organizations (FBOs) and churches that have addressed health challenges and injustice.

We celebrate the equal, inherent dignity and value of every human being.

We affirm the potential and reach of equipped faith communities to bring about change by creating platforms for dialogue and collaboration among people.

We pray for those living with or affected by HIV and for their loved ones.

We pray to receive strength and courage to fight injustice, inequalities and stigma and discrimination within our faith communities.

Forgive us, if we do not always stand up against a system that perpetuates injustice. Show us how we can serve all of your children. If we are to see a day when there are zero new HIV infections, zero discrimination, and zero AIDS-related deaths, guide us, oh God, to work together to ensure that compassion, 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.

Amen

There is no community more called to make a difference in the lives of others than the Church.

Vincent Manning – CAPS Chairperson

Music

Prayer for Unity of the Spirit in the Bond of Peace

by Odoi Odotei, World Vision International (Ephesians 4:1-6)

Leader:

Loving God,
We come together as brothers, sisters and partners this World AIDS Day

People:

In the unity of the Spirit, in the bond of peace.

Leader:

We join together this day and always, united in our lament over all the suffering that has been caused by HIV and AIDS

People:

In the unity of the Spirit, in the bond of peace.

Leader:

From faith leaders to peer educators, from counsellors to community health workers, from civil society organizers to grass-roots activists, we stand together, serving those in need as the hands and feet and heart of Jesus Christ

People:

In the unity of the Spirit, in the bond of peace.

Leader:

Here with these people we are together called to a collective restoration.

People:

In the unity of the Spirit, in the bond of peace.

Leader:

We ask for the grace to humbly serve together, rooted in your love, to gently, patiently lift each other up, as partners

People:

In the unity of the Spirit, in the bond of peace.

Leader:

Would you work through us to bring healing and wholeness to those who are hurting and afflicted?

People:

In the unity of the Spirit, in the bond of peace.

Leader:

Heal our own hearts from any misgivings we have for others or one another

People:

In the unity of the Spirit, in the bond of peace.

Leader:

Here we are, a small part of one body in one Spirit,
with one Lord, one faith, and one baptism

People:

In the unity of the Spirit, in the bond of peace.

Leader:

Here we share hope in one God of all,
who is above all and through all and in all

People:

In the unity of the Spirit, in the bond of peace.

Amen

Reading

Matthew 22:33-39

33When the crowds heard this, they were astonished at his teaching. 34Hearing that Jesus had silenced the Sadducees, the Pharisees got together. 35One of them, an expert in the law, tested him with this question: 36“Teacher, which is the greatest commandment in the Law?” 37Jesus replied: 38“‘Love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind.’ 38This is the first and greatest commandment. 39And the second is like it: ‘Love your neighbor as yourself.’

Communities make a difference: practices of solidarity and love.

The theme of this year’s World AIDS Day on December 1st is ‘Communities make the difference’. The volunteers and members of ‘Catholics for AIDS Prevention and Support’ (CAPS) try to make a difference in various ways. First, we prioritize people living with HIV (PLWH) through our peer support groups and our ‘Positive Catholics’ ministry. The members of our community understand the psychological, social, physical, material and spiritual challenges of living with HIV at a deep level, through personal experience. In turn, motivated by Christian service, they offer support and encouragement to others, in practices of solidarity and love. An HIV diagnosis comes as a massive shock to most people. HIV disproportionately impacts groups who are already disadvantaged because of immigration status, poverty, poor mental health, ethnicity or sexual orientation. For someone already on the margins of society, afforded little respect, an HIV diagnosis is felt as another assault on their dignity. HIV stigma remains so powerful, that often people keep their diagnosis secret, and thus hide a part of themselves, even from those whom they consider friends. Living with HIV often pushes a person further to the margins of society, family and church. We try to be with such people, and trust that with time, understanding and acceptance, healing and strengthening can begin in the lives of those who have been wounded, especially those who suffer multiple afflictions.

Second, CAPS makes a difference within the HIV sector. Clinics refer especially isolated patients to our groups, because they know they will be welcomed as they are. We advise the nurse who doesn’t know what to say to the desperate patient, who refuses life-saving medication, because her Pastor has told her to ‘trust in God’. CAPS advocates for the religious needs of PLWH within the Public Health sector. We argue for the rights of all people to access healthcare, housing, social services and decent employment. For secular agencies who recognize the importance of faith for many of their clients, but do not have the resources to meet spiritual need, we provide retreats, Christian community and spaces for renewal that can make the difference between mere survival and the human flourishing that God intends.

Third, through workshops, presentations and publications we call the church to respond to the needs of PLWH. Considering how our sisters and brothers living with HIV are excluded, challenges us all to consider more deeply, what we mean when we say that ‘All are welcome’ in Church. Do we really mean that? Is it enough to say it? Are there actions that we can take to make Church a more inviting and welcoming community for those who are more usually excluded?

Fourth, CAPS makes a difference whenever individuals living with HIV are empowered to become seen and heard. In the HIV sector and society our members witness to the Good News of Jesus Christ for all people, including those living with HIV. When our members share their stories with Christians they make themselves vulnerable before their own faith community. Whether publicly or more intimately, through this vulnerable sharing of themselves, the issues raised by the fact of HIV are ‘brought into Church’.

The questions of sex and relationships and mortality; questions of the limits of God’s mercy and love; questions about prejudices and exclusionary practices within the Church; all these issues and more, that we might ordinarily avoid, are set before us, embodied in a person with courage. As adult disciples of Jesus, Positive Catholics enact a pedagogy of vulnerable encounter, as gift and witness for the whole Body of Christ. Prejudice, ignorance, fear and judgement are overcome through meaningful personal encounter. Which Christian can say that they have not been transformed by an encounter

with the Christ whom they have met in others, often in the most surprising of ways?

There is no community more called to make a difference in the lives of others than the Church. Thank you for the ways in which you make a difference in your daily life for others.

Written by Vincent Manning – CAPS Chairperson

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Prayer

Lord, you are our refuge and hope. We commit to welcome each and every community member, family member, relative, friend and co-worker who is living with HIV and AIDS. [...] We know your unfailing love to us all for you have created us in your own image. [...]

[...] Lord have mercy upon us and our cry should be heard by You Merciful Lord. The Name of Jesus the healer is greater than the name of any disease or disorder including HIV and AIDS. [...]

[...] Yes Lord we know that you care for your children [...] Remind us all to share with them what you provide to us that in sharing we may demonstrate your unfailing love. Raise in us abundant love to one another and hope in all the situations we are in and not lose our faith in you God, the almighty.

We make this prayer trusting in your Son Jesus Christ, who reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God world without end. **Amen.**

The Right Reverend Brighton Vita Malasa – Bishop of the Anglican Diocese of Upper Shire MALAWI (adapted)

Peter 4:10

10Each of you should use whatever gift you have received to serve others, as faithful stewards of God’s grace in its various forms.

Moment of silence and personal reflection

Prayer: The Ones We Long For

by John van de Laar

In a world that too easily wounds and breaks,
we long for those who will heal and restore;

In a world that too easily divides and dissects,
we long for those who will unify and interweave;

In a world that too easily excludes and judges,
we long for those who will include and understand;

And in a world where your call, O God, can still be heard,
we long for the courage to answer,
and to be the ones we long for.

Amen.

Act of solidarity

Nehemiah 2:18

And they said, “Let us rise up and build.” So they strengthened their hands for the good work.

Ask participants to “raise up and build” a faith community that contributes to end the suffering, injustice, stigma and discrimination that people living with HIV face every day. Invite participants to write their own commitment to help raising awareness and sharing information about HIV. Ask them to think of activities with people living with HIV that could help addressing HIV-related stigma and discrimination in your faith community. Invite those who wish to share their commitment in this moment of prayer.

Music

Prayer

by John van de Laar (adapted)

*Change us as we encounter Your glory,
that we may carry Your light into the world.*
Into this place of worship, we bring the hopes and needs
of all who find themselves in the dark places of the world;
The grieving, the sick, the abused and the forgotten.
Into this place of worship, we bring the hopes and dreams
of all who have lost their purpose and vision;
The rejected, the fallen, the disappointed and the discouraged.
Into this place of worship, we bring the hopes and courage
of all who serve and uplift others;
And we pray that we may fill the earth,
as dawn fills the sky. Amen.

Common Voice Pledge

Reader: *The AIDS epidemic is at a critical point. A remarkable, decades-long global effort has given us the capability to end AIDS as a public health threat. Strong advocacy by religious voices is vital to ensuring that the world perseveres and finally brings the AIDS epidemic to an end.*

Group: As leaders and followers of different religious traditions, we are speaking together with a common voice to urgently demand that the world re-commit to ending AIDS.

Leader: We are speaking with a common voice because our diverse religious traditions share many sacred values.

All: We share a conviction that all human beings must be treated with dignity and respect.

All: We share a responsibility to reach out to the marginalized and to protect the vulnerable.

Leader: Although HIV and AIDS affect different people, regions, and social groups differently, we know that the epidemic affects the entire human community.

Response: As members of the human community, we commit to playing our part in bringing the AIDS epidemic to an end.

Leader: We recognize that religious beliefs and practices have sometimes been used to justify judgmental attitudes and that the resulting stigma and discrimination have harmed people living with HIV and have weakened the global response to the AIDS epidemic.

Response: We reject these judgmental attitudes and we commit to fighting stigma and discrimination within our religious communities and within society at large.

Leader: We believe that all people should have access to HIV prevention and treatment services, including people who are marginalized by society.

Response: We strongly urge universal access to HIV services, provided with dignity and respect, and

without stigma, discrimination, or fear of criminal prosecution.

Leader: We believe that our religious communities must be places of hope for people living with HIV.

Response: We commit to providing HIV services that address each unique individual’s physical, social, emotional, and spiritual needs.

Leader: We believe that followers of our religious traditions have a personal responsibility to know their HIV status and to refrain from behavior that risks transmission of HIV.

Response: We commit to equipping members of our communities with knowledge about all HIV prevention methods so that they can take responsibility for avoiding HIV transmission.

All: Compelled by our common values, and with prayers for perseverance, wisdom, and divine guidance, we commit to building bridges with other religious traditions and we invite followers of all traditions to join us as we work together to end AIDS.

www.CommonVoiceAIDS.org.

Closing Prayer

Dear Heavenly Father,

We are here yet again this year remembering our sisters, brothers, relatives, friends and everyone else who lives with HIV and AIDS. We are praying for your divine mercy upon them for the resources required for survival. May your grace be upon us all so that we can be mindful of the affected and the infected, particularly the children and adolescents who live with it or were orphaned along the way. Help us to continue reaching out to more people with the right information and let us have the zeal to become engaged faith communities to address the drivers and injustices that contribute to the spread of HIV.

[...] May you help us all to create awareness and accept those living with HIV; and may you give us solutions to be able to curb this condition.

May you guide us to be safe and welcome spaces to all.

[...] We pray this trusting and believing in your mighty name.

Amen!

Ann Mwaniki, young Kenyan woman (prayer adapted)

Sending out

Loving God,

Make of us a safe haven for those who are abandoned, discriminated against and rejected on account of their illness. Inspire us to speak out and act together for a just distribution of health care and for us to become a faith community that loves, welcomes and actively collaborates with people living with HIV.

Loving God, we thank you for hearing our prayers,
feeding us with your word,
and encouraging us in our meeting together.
Take us and use us
to love and serve you, and all people,
in the power of your Spirit
and in the name of your Son,
Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

Music



FAITH ON THE FAST TRACK

Service prepared by Francesca Merico, World Council of Churches – Ecumenical Advocacy Alliance

With contributions from:

The Right Reverend Brighton Vita Malasa – Bishop of the Anglican Diocese of Upper Shire MALAWI

Dan Irvine (World Vision International)

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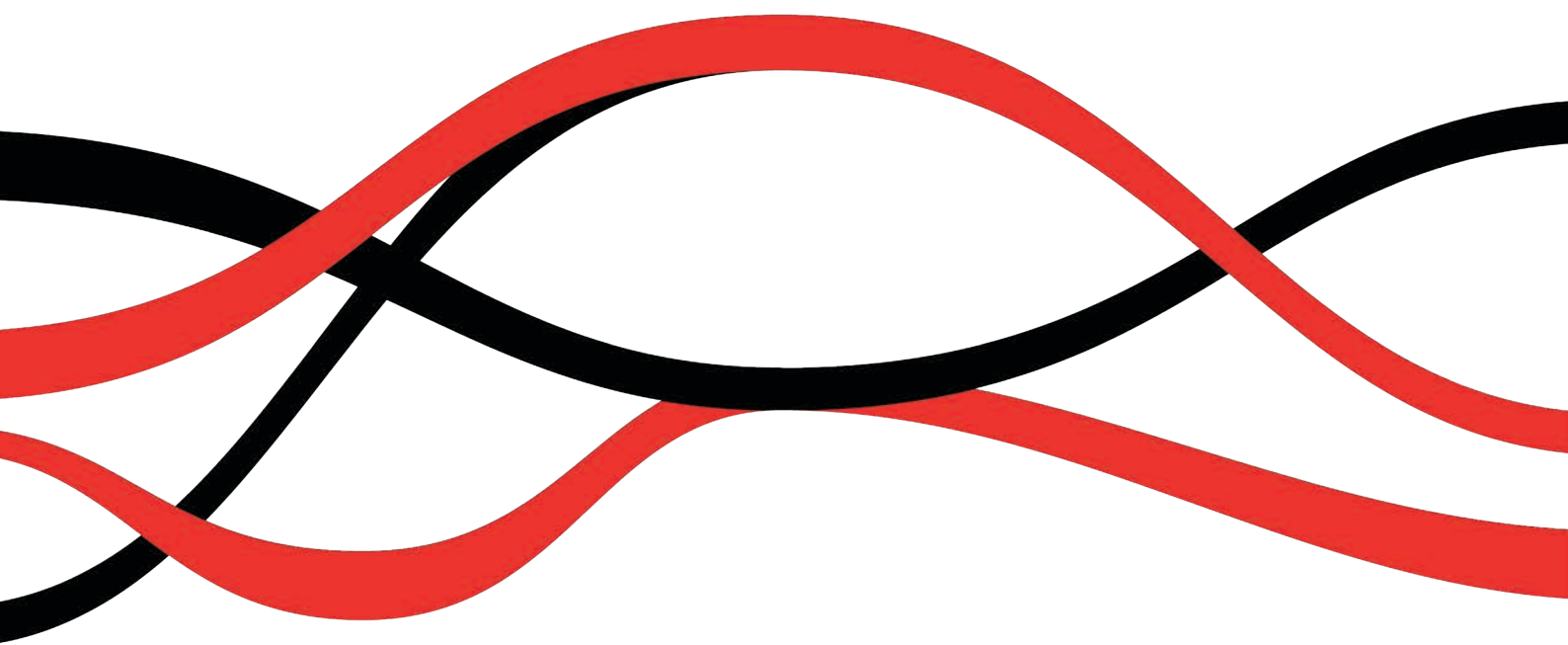
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