



Overcoming inequalities with justice and love

World AIDS Day 2021

Order of service



World Council
of Churches

Overcoming inequalities with Justice and Love

In the context of the '16 Days of Activism against Gender-Based Violence'

Opening Sentences

Leader:

O people - you who are mighty, and you who are not;

Attribute all glory and strength to God!

Let us give God the glory;

Let us worship God in the beauty of holiness.

The voice of God is over all creation,

Over the waters, stormy or still;

The voice of the Lord is powerful and thunders,

The voice of the Lord is also a gentle whisper;

Let our ears be attentive to wisdom,

Inclining our hearts to understanding;

May the Lord give strength and God's grace in kindness to all people!

May the Lord bless all people with justice and peace!

(Prayer based on Psalm 29: 1- 4, 11; Psalm 23:2; Proverbs 2: 2; 1 Kings 19:13 & Ephesians 2:7)

Song

Lamentation

Leader: God, we remember before you today our sisters, brothers, friends, young people and children we have lost to the AIDS pandemic. The 680,000 people who died in 2020, the hundreds of thousands who lost their lives this year, and the 36.3 million people who have died from AIDS-related illnesses from the beginning of the pandemic in the 1980s. We remember them and name them in our hearts.

Silence

**Response: Restore us, restore humanity, O God;
Let your face shine, that we may be saved.**

(based on Psalms 80:7)

Leader: Though 28.2 million people are accessing antiretroviral therapy, we acknowledge that nearly 12 million children, women and men living with HIV are yet to receive treatment. We are also aware that entrenched inequalities could lead to 7.7 million more AIDS-related deaths during this decade, if decisive steps are not taken. God, we are reminded of the cost of inaction and neglect.

Silence

**Response: Restore us, restore humanity, O God;
Let your face shine, that we may be saved.**

Leader: Lord we acknowledge that our societies are guilty of not valuing girls and women and contributing to perpetuating violence against women and girls. We are fostering inequalities and harmful gender norms, which are heightening risks of women and girls acquiring HIV and of experiencing disproportionate economic, health and social impacts of both HIV and COVID-19 pandemics. We lament that in sub-Saharan Africa six in seven new HIV infections affecting adolescents are among girls.

Silence

**Response: Restore us, restore humanity, O God;
Let your face shine, that we may be saved.**

Leader: Lord we are not standing up sufficiently to overcome stigma and discrimination against all people living with and affected by HIV, particularly marginalized and key populations. The dignity and rights of key populations are being violated and they are being made even more vulnerable, as they and their partners are burdened by 65% of HIV infections globally.

Silence

**Response: Restore us, restore humanity, O God;
Let your face shine, that we may be saved.**

Leader: Lord, while 74% of the administered COVID-19 vaccines worldwide have been given in high, upper and middle-income countries, only 0.7% of doses have been administered in low-income countries. In Sub-Saharan Africa, only 6 to 10% of the population have received vaccinations. The delay in the roll out is not only a moral failure, but also devastating public health, leading to the evolution of mutations, which may substantially reduce the usefulness of the current vaccines. While the response should be to massively mobilise and distribute the vaccines - by whatever means possible - including waiving intellectual property rights and capacitating more manufacturers to produce the vaccines; the world and we have not been doing enough.

Silence

**Response: Restore us, restore humanity, O God;
Let your face shine, that we may be saved.**

Song

Confession

Leader: Forgiving God, today as we remember the untold lives lost because of the AIDS pandemic and those who today continue to live with HIV, we, your people confess before you that:

- We have a dearth of courage to speak up and act against injustice and exploitation of women and girls.
- We lack the faith in your power, to challenge stigma and discrimination and to work harder to transform society.
- We have neglected to live in hope and strive for justice each day; to wait on you and to give hope and courage to those who are marginalized, by extending adequate support, care and treatment.
- We have not loved others as ourselves and have not acknowledged the presence of the Divine in them.
- We have stood by silently and even contributed to the suffering and inequalities experienced by the vulnerable and those in need.

**Response: Forgive us, we have disobeyed you.
Even our best efforts are but faded and dried leaves;
Blown away by the constant gusts of our inequities.**

Leader: O Lord, you are our Father and Mother,
We are the clay, and you are our potter.
Shape us and mould us, to receive your Holy Spirit;
Overflowing with love and the water of life!
Do not be exceedingly angry, O Lord, and do not remember our iniquities forever.

**Response: Now consider, we are all your children
and grant us your forgiveness. Amen.**
(based on Isaiah 64:6,8,9)

Song: Lord have mercy (Kyrie Eleison)

Words of Assurance: A reading from Romans 8: 32-35, 37-39

If God is for us, who is against us? He who did not withhold his own Son, but gave him up for all of us, will he not with him also give us everything else? Who will bring any charge against God's elect? It is God who justifies. Who is to condemn? It is Christ Jesus, who died, yes, who was raised, who is at the right hand of God, who indeed intercedes for us. Who will separate us from the love of Christ? Will hardship, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword?....

No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us. For I am convinced that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor rulers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor powers, nor height, nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord.

All: Thanks be to God.

Reflection questions:

- If each child of God is entitled to the Love of God, how does this love translate to in the life of each girl, woman, and each member of a marginalised community in the context of the HIV and COVID-19 pandemics?
- Can one experience the Love of God without Justice?
- What barriers hinders a girl, women, and a member of a marginalised community to experience the love of God in the context of the HIV and COVID-19 pandemics?
- What specific action and advocacy can we take to ensure that Love and Justice can flow unhindered and overcome inequalities?

Intercessory Prayers

Leader: God of love and justice, help us to open our hearts and minds, so that together we will work towards ending the stigma and discrimination that People living with HIV continue to experience in society and in accessing services. May we be instruments of your compassion and accompaniment to those who are particularly vulnerable to HIV because of the use of drugs, their sexual practices or being incarcerated, and who frequently lack adequate access to services and experience violation of their dignity and rights. We pray that faith communities embrace and accompany all people with the unconditional love and justice of Christ, leading this transformation by example, to keep on track to end AIDS by 2030.

Response: Lord in your mercy, hear our prayers!

Leader: Let us say the Lord's prayer, each in our own language.

The Lord's Prayer *(in the various languages)*

Act of Commitment

Leader: Let us stand firm, waiting on the Lord; alert and awake.
The spirit of the Lord God is upon us;

All: Anointed to bring good news to the oppressed, to lead by example.

Leader: Adorning a mantle of praise instead of a faint spirit;

All: We commit ourselves to ensure that the 12 million children, young people, women and men living with HIV who are yet to receive antiretroviral treatment, will get the care, treatment and services that they are deprived of.

Leader: We commit to heal and care for the sick and broken-hearted;

All: Bearing one another's burdens, fulfilling the teachings of Lord Jesus Christ.

Leader: We commit to ensure that Love and Justice can flow unhindered:

All: To overcome inequalities.

Leader: We commit to acknowledge you and serve you, Lord, in the other;

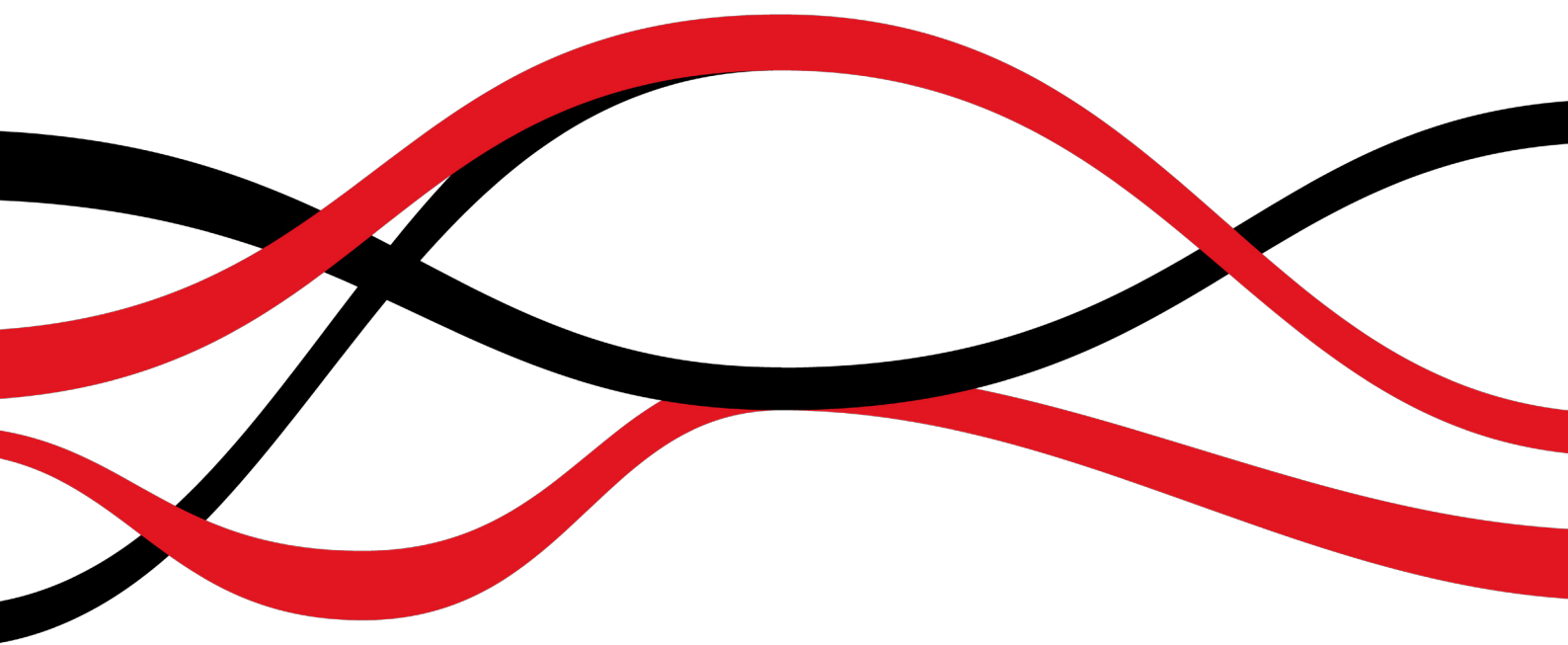
All: Seeing you Lord, in the neediest and most vulnerable.

(adapted from Isaiah 61:1, 3 ; Galatians 6:2 ; Matthew 25: 40)

Benediction

**Now may the peace of Christ rule in our hearts
so that we will go from this place
to demonstrate Christ's love to the world,
in the name of the Father, and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.**

Amen!



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