

End Inequalities- End Aids

World AIDS Day 1 December 2022
Order of service



World Council
of Churches

Order of Service for World AIDS Day 2022

End Inequalities- End Aids

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

Welcome to our World AIDS Day service. This year we are reminded that dangerous inequalities are holding back the end of AIDS. Gender inequalities, of inequalities faced by key populations, and of inequalities between children and adults. In a context of worsening financial constraints, it is getting more difficult to address these inequalities. In 2021, 650 000 people's lives were lost to AIDS and 1.5 million people newly acquired HIV. We gather today to mobilize our prayers and actions to end the inequalities in access to rights, access to care and services, and access to the best medicine science provides.

Opening Prayer

The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ,
the gift available to everyone without exception,
the love of God,
whom claims each person equally as a child in the image of the divine,
and the communion of the Holy Spirit,
through whom we breathe in life, and connect to all others breathing,
is with us as we gather
honouring the compassion of the Blessed Trinity,
one God, now and forever. Amen

Hymn/Song Prayer

God of the forsaken and forgotten,
who seeks out the lost,
and gathers the fearful into welcoming arms,
remove from us the pride that refuses to see others as our equals.

**Take away the distinctions by which we claim some are worthy and others can be ignored.
Defeat the selfishness that demands we, and those like us, get better choices,
while others are left behind.**

Give us new eyes for seeing the injustice you see,
new ears for hearing the cries arising for help,
new energy for doing your will,
so that no one living with HIV remains forsaken,
and no one, regardless of their origin or status,
stays forgotten by those who have what they need.

**God of life;
You have given us the tools to end HIV.
Fill us with the energy to find the means to use them,
So that this disease, which has killed and hurt for over forty years, might finally end.**

The crosses once adorned with red ribbons,
might no longer mark the dread of this disease.
But be released to proclaim unencumbered the death and resurrection of Christ Jesus,
through whom we are set free, now and to eternity. **Amen.**

Scripture Reading: Isaiah 49:14-16

¹⁴ But Zion said, 'The Lord has forsaken me,
my Lord has forgotten me.'

¹⁵ Can a woman forget her nursing-child,
or show no compassion for the child of her womb?

Even these may forget,
yet I will not forget you.

¹⁶ See, I have inscribed you on the palms of my hands;
your walls are continually before me.

¹⁷ Your builders outdo your destroyers,
and those who laid you waste go away from you.

¹⁸ Lift up your eyes all around and see;
they all gather, they come to you.

As I live, says the Lord,
you shall put all of them on like an ornament,
and like a bride you shall bind them on.

Gospel Reading: Matthew 15:21-28

²¹ Jesus left that place and went away to the district of Tyre and Sidon. ²² Just then a Canaanite woman from that region came out and started shouting, 'Have mercy on me, Lord, Son of David; my daughter is tormented by a demon.' ²³ But he did not answer her at all. And his disciples came and urged him, saying, 'Send her away, for she keeps shouting after us.' ²⁴ He answered, 'I was sent only to the lost sheep of the house of Israel.' ²⁵ But she came and knelt before him, saying, 'Lord, help me.' ²⁶ He answered, 'It is not fair to take the children's food and throw it to the dogs.' ²⁷ She said, 'Yes, Lord, yet even the dogs eat the crumbs that fall from their masters' table.' ²⁸ Then Jesus answered her, 'Woman, great is your faith! Let it be done for you as you wish.' And her daughter was healed instantly.

Reflection:

A demanding foreign woman makes claims on Jesus. She is noisy and disturbing. But Jesus gives no reply. Who in your community is making the commotion that others try and ignore?

The disciples get fed up. They ask Jesus to get rid of her, and Jesus tries. Although not said openly, who do you or your community want sent away?

The woman insists. Her daughter's life is at stake. She will take crumbs, hardly equal with others get, but better than nothing. In terms of HIV, who is getting the crumbs and who is getting what they need? How might the request for crumbs lead to a greater healing?

We need to push beyond the Gospel story. Many in need are too ashamed or too lonely to raise their voices. Many are too young or too sick to find their voice. They slink into the shadows, into the silence and stigma where HIV replicates. How does God's love, along with the possibility of help, reach them? What arms do we offer to those feeling forgotten?

Hymn/Song

Prayers of Intercession

O Lord, gender inequalities and unequal power dynamics between men and women and harmful gender norms are making women and girls vulnerable to HIV. It is depriving them of the voice and the ability to make decisions regarding their lives, and reducing their ability to access services, including for HIV. Help us

to be contrite and humble and transform harmful gender and masculinity norms among men and boys to help reduce vulnerabilities to HIV among women and adolescent girls. Help us strive for justice and righteousness so that the love of God is experienced unhindered by every woman and girl child.

Lord in your mercy,
Hear our prayers

O Lord, the world is still failing the children living with HIV, with just over half of them receiving treatment for HIV. Though children accounted for only 4% of all people living with HIV, children made up 15% of all AIDS-related deaths. Help us to intensify mother-centered strategic efforts to prevent vertical transmission. Help us to ensure that all HIV-exposed infants are tested within the first two months of life and can receive care and appropriate treatments consistently and without delay. Help us to accompany children born with HIV as they transition to adolescence and adulthood.

Lord in your mercy,
Hear our prayers

O Lord, key affected communities who are most vulnerable to being affected by HIV, continue to carry the greatest burden of the disease. Discrimination against, stigmatization and criminalization of key populations are costing lives and preventing the world from achieving agreed AIDS targets. Help us to be protectors, accompaniers and companions of those facing continued discrimination, cruel rejection, sometimes by those closest, and senseless violence.

Lord in your mercy,
Hear our prayers

With those locked in poverty, illiteracy, unemployment and violence who each day feel their dignity seep away,
with those exposed to abusive partners, or enslaved in sex work,
with those struggling to affirm their sexuality as they sort through the conflicting counsels of culture, church, school, and sometimes even the community they are trying to join, we cry out,

Lord in your mercy,
Hear our prayers

Prayer of Thanksgiving and Commitment

For all the progress,
We thank you, God of life.

Because of the testing that allows people living with HIV to get treatment,
because of the prevention and treatment defeating HIV,
bringing down its level to the point that it is now longer transmitted,
because people living with HIV can live healthy and full lives,

We rejoice, gracious God, that you set us free from fear.

For the doctors, nurses and health workers taking care,
the policymakers and implementers figuring out how to get resources where it is most needed,
for peers puncturing false information with what is scientifically sound,
for teachers with open hearts and minds that allow for honest exploration
and at the same time point to patterns that protect and give worth,

We celebrate, loving God, those doing good work.

God of the forgotten, God of the forsaken,
encourage our voices to cry out, so that no one is left out.
Teach us to live simply, so that others can simply live
following the example of your Beloved, Jesus Christ.
To strive and to make our resources life-giving for others,
so your love becomes real to those who feel forsaken, forgotten,
and no one is left with crumbs, but all are healed, and HIV becomes no more.

The Lord's Prayer (*in our own languages*)

Benediction

**May the blessings of God the Father, God the Son and God the Holy Spirit –
in the mystery of the Holy Trinity –
Make us whole in every way now and for evermore. Amen.**

Prayers written by Terry MacArthur, Manoj Kurian and Gracia Violeta Ross

