



**WORLD AIDS DAY: Take the rights path: My health, my
right!!
Sunday, 01 December 2024**

*With the Ecumenical Prayer Cycle, we pray today for the people and churches in Myanmar, Thailand
in the context of '16 Days of Activism against Gender-Based Violence',*

Introduction

According to the latest UNAIDS report on HIV, 40 million people globally were living with HIV in 2023, 1.3 million people have newly acquired HIV, and 630,000 people died from AIDS-related illnesses. Almost 31 million people were receiving lifesaving antiretroviral therapy in 2023. Still, a quarter of people living with HIV – (9.3 million people) who need lifesaving treatment, especially children and adolescents living with HIV, are yet to get treated. At least half of all people from key populations are not being reached with prevention services.

Under the theme "Take the rights path: My health, my right!" churches and communities are called to champion the right to health by addressing the inequalities that hinder progress in ending AIDS.

Invitation

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

Opening 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 40 million 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 Romans 8: 31-39

³¹ What then are we to say about these things? If God is for us, who is against us? ³² He who did not withhold his own Son but gave him up for all of us, how will he not with him also give us everything else? ³³ Who will bring any charge against God's elect? It is God who justifies. ³⁴ Who is to condemn? It is Christ who died, or rather, who was raised, who is also at the right hand of God, who also intercedes for us. ³⁵ Who will separate us from the love of Christ? Will affliction or distress or persecution or famine or nakedness or peril or sword? ³⁶ As it is written, "For your sake we are being killed all day long; we are accounted as sheep to be slaughtered."

³⁷ No, in all these things we are more than victorious through him who loved us. ³⁸ For I am convinced that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor rulers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor powers, ³⁹ 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.

Word of God, word of life.

Thanks be to God.

Reflection Rev Christo Greyling

Member of the Commission of the Churches on Health and Healing, and the Chair of the Working Group on HIV and Reproductive Health

The theme of this year's World AIDS Day is – take the Rights path to end AIDS! There is a convergence of the Rights path- and the Vision of God's radical love that we are mandated to manifest in the community. Romans 8: 31-39 reminds us that In Jesus, God has given us everything and nothing can separate us from God's love –not our HIV status, not our identity, our age, or status – be it in health, economic, social or education.

The scriptures make it abundantly clear that we are all entitled to a dignified life.

- God has plans for us that gives us hope and a future and will let us prosper (Jeremiah 29: 11)
- God will satisfy all our needs- we will be a well-watered garden, a spring that never fails (Isaiah 58: 11)
- God fully satisfies every need of all, according to God's riches in glory (Philippians 4: 19).
- Have life, have to the full (John 10:10b)

Romans 8: 38 & 39 say- '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'. So, it is our sacred duty to advocate and act to ensure that every barrier that prevents each child of God from experiencing the love of God and experiencing the possibility of living dignified lives- is removed. There is a convergence of the Rights path- and to make the Vision of all to experience God's radical love a reality.

We are part of one body- and in the Christian teachings- we are part of the body of Christ-

- Galatians 3:28- reminds us that There is no longer- Jew or Greek, slave or free, male and female; for all of you are one in Christ Jesus.
- 1 Corinthians 12:12-27- indicates that as part of one body- we are simply the different parts.

But if that is the case, can we say that if one hand is in the fire, and the other hand is in water- on average- we are fine? The concept of one body has to move beyond rhetoric. It has to be experienced. We have to be empathetic to one another's needs, and in solidarity, respond in a timely manner with compassion and competence. We cannot rest when parts of this one body are suffering and are being stigmatized. We have to respond responsibly and together and make a difference in the lives of those who are hurting.

As leaders, we must mentor young leaders. We are running a relay race. We are not running our races. The goals that we seek- the establishment of the Kingdom of God here on earth- where all experience just, peace, health and fulfilment- cannot be achieved by our individual races. We have to pass on the baton of the relay race to the next runners as we finish our part. We must run with all our heart, strength, passion, and spirit towards the goal- but we must pass on the baton. Please pass on the baton so that the race can continue successfully toward the goals that may not be accomplished in our lifetime. For that to happen, we must mentor young leaders to take our place so they can build on what we have achieved, achieve greater heights, do more extraordinary feats, and make the world a better place.

The world can end AIDS—if the human rights of people living with or affected by HIV are respected, protected and fulfilled, to ensure equitable, accessible and high-quality HIV services. As a community of faith, let us act together in faith.

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, 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 accompany, protect and be companions of those facing continued discrimination. Help us to ensure that those affected by HIV and communities who are most vulnerable to acquiring the infection are equipped to provide leadership and show the way to overcome the HIV pandemic.

Lord in your mercy,

Hear our prayers.

With those locked in poverty, illiteracy, unemployment and violence who each day feel their dignity undermined, 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.

We thank you for the witness and the lives of churches and communities in Myanmar and Thailand. We pray for minority ethnic and religious groups who continue to experience discrimination, persecution or even genocide (such as the Rohingyas), and for greater interfaith understanding and tolerance for ethnic and religious diversity. We also pray for those victimized by sex tourism and exploitation, and those who perpetuate such acts. We also pray for political stability and progress toward democratic rule, economic justice for all people, and environmental protection, as these countries undergo growth and development. We pray for our world, your whole creation, to be renewed and transformed.

Lord in your mercy,
Hear our prayers.

Prayer of Thanksgiving

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 Community leaders who lead by example challenging inequity and injustice,
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.

Prayer of Commitment

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. **Amen**

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.**