

HIV/AIDS WORSHIP RESOURCES

In preparation for a service lifting up HIV/AIDS, consider reviewing the actions of General Assemblies of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.). Summaries of the Church's official stances, policies, and guidelines can be found in the Presbyterian Social Witness Policy Compilation (<http://www.pcusa.org/acswp/>).

CALLS TO WORSHIP

Call to Worship #1

Jesus said, "You shall be my witnesses ...to the end of the earth." Witnessing is not speaking only. It is a doing, an acting. Christian witnessing is in the actions of every Christian who lives out the "good news of Jesus Christ." Witnessing is made manifest in the contagious joy that comes from a life of absolute trust in the Divine Goodness and Power over the world and sinfulness. Witnessing is made manifest in the compassionate actions of caring persons, individuals and communities who carry God and God's compassion into the world. Yet the lure and clamor of the world are so consuming, tumultuous, strident and demanding. We scarcely can hear the still small whispered voice of calm. We are gathered out of a concern for immense suffering among the people living and dying of AIDS. We gather out of concern for others and ourselves and acknowledge that we fail to understand the realities of AIDS. We do not see clearly yet how to be responsive in a meaningful way. We come simply as a people of faith, convinced that God wills healing, justice and peace; that God gives wisdom and shows us the way; that God gives us grace and livens our hearts .

*National Council of Churches and Louisville Presbyterian Theological Seminary
World AIDS Service 2004*

Call to Worship #2

One: We come to search out the love by which we are loved and to give thanks.

Many: We come with the fragments of communities within us; as lovers, as friends, as families, and as concerned people.

One: But without God's presence among us there is not community of the spirit.

Many: We come asking for the vision to perceive the brother and sister in our midst, and to reach out for their hands and embrace their spirits.

One: God calls us to love, to plunge ourselves into the hurts and sufferings, to give ourselves fully to those who are in need. God calls us to be present to those who are without love.

All: God calls us this day.

CALLS TO CONFESSION

Call to Confession #1

One: Last night 8,000 people died of AIDS.

Response: Forgive us for our complacency.

One: Last night 5,760 children were orphaned because of AIDS.

Response: Forgive us for our apathy.

One: Every 9 seconds someone new is infected with AIDS.

Response: Forgive us for not having the time to raise awareness.

One: Everyday people with AIDS starve to death too poor to afford food and too sick to work.

Response: Forgive us for turning a blind eye to your children.

One: About 20% (1 in 5) of your population is infected with HIV.

Response: God, help us to see how to help them.

One: As Americans, many of our domestic and foreign policies think only of the bottom line; we lose sight of your children living with AIDS by supporting these policies.

Response: Let us not be partners of greed, but of good will.

One: As leaders of faith, we fail your children with HIV/AIDS.

Response: Forgive us for being too busy to visit those who are sick in the hospital.

One: As leaders of faith, we fail your children with HIV/AIDS.

Response: Forgive us when we preach words of harm, rather than of love.

One: As leaders of faith, we fail your children with HIV/AIDS.

Response: Forgive us when we put those with AIDS on the back of our agenda in worship, meetings, and assemblies.

One: As leaders of faith, we fail your children with HIV/AIDS.

Response: Forgive us when we, as your pastors, refuse to conduct funerals for people who have died of AIDS.

One: We stereotype your children with AIDS, we shun them, we hurt them and we disregard them.

Response: Help us to see with the eyes of our heart, God. Help us to welcome those who are suffering into our Churches, our communities, our houses and into our hearts.

One: AIDS has devastated your children. Millions are dying, millions are orphaned, millions are sick. Yet, we do nothing and keep “those” people at arms length.

Response: Dear God in Heaven, help us.

One: We are far from powerless in this fight against HIV/AIDS. With hearts full of love and souls full of grace we can make a difference.

Response: Dear God in Heaven, help us to stand in solidarity with the suffering and have the courage to help those in need.

One: Let us be comforted in the sure faith through Jesus Christ that God indeed forgives those who repent. Let us be reassured by the word of St. Augustine when he replied that love “has the hands to help others. It has the feet to hasten the poor and needy. It has the eyes to see misery and want. It has the ears to hear sighs and sorrows.” That my friends is what love looks like.

*Andrew Black for Louisville Presbyterian Theological Seminary
World AIDS Worship Service 12/1/2004*

Call to Confession #2

One: Holy God, we are sorry for the times when someone needed us and we turned away.

Many: We are sorry for the times someone stretched out a hand and we pretended not to notice.

One: We are sorry for the times someone needed to be held and we clung to safety instead.

Many: We are sorry for the times truth was on our tongues and we swallowed it instead of speaking it.

One: We are sorry for the times that love was in our hearts and we were too ashamed and embarrassed to express it.

Many: We are sorry for the times fear was in our hearts and we did not trust you.

One: We are sorry for the times that we claimed to be innocent bystanders while we knew that we were being guilty participants by upholding systems of injustice.

Many: We are sorry for the times strangers asked us for something and we pretended not to understand what they needed from us.

One: We are sorry for not having loved enough.

Many: We are sorry for not loving all your children with every part of being.

All: Renew our confidence in your power and in the power of love to change our lives, and give us courage to be the fully responsible persons that you call us to be. Amen.

(Presbyterian AIDS Network (PAN))

PRAYERS

Prayer #1

One: Holy God, we know you hear the prayers and cries of your people.

Many: Our lips express great need and we turn to your listening presence.

One: Loving and listening God, we pray for the strength needed to help ease the burden of illness and stand in solidarity with those living with HIV/AIDS.

Many: Help us to see that in sharing one another's grief, we grow in strength and compassion.

One: We pray for those infected and affected by HIV/AIDS; may they be strengthened to call upon you and upon us for help and mercy.

Many: Hear their prayers, God, and grant us the hearts needed to respond to their calls. Help us to meet their needs with loving spirits and willing hands.

One: We pray for the young who are infected with HIV/AIDS and those who are orphaned because of AIDS.

Many: Extend to the young your loving presence and comfort them when they feel scared and all alone.

One: Gracious God, we thank you for the friends, families, religious organizations and medical communities who help care for and support those living with HIV/AIDS. Help these people remain steadfast in their commitment to helping those living with HIV/AIDS.

Many: Holy God, help fill them with the knowledge of your healing and redemptive love. Remind us all of the hope we find in you.

One: We pray for all who are ill that they may have courage, strength and hope.

Many: Oh, God, inspire us to love and care for all of your children. Help us to serve those in need so that we may better serve you.

Andrew Black, Presbyterian Health, Education and Welfare Association (PHEWA)

Prayer #2

Praise the Lord, for God is gracious and a song of praise is right. God gathers us outcasts, heals our broken hearts and binds up our wounds. Great is our God, and abundant in power, with understanding beyond all measure. The Lord lifts up the downtrodden, and takes pleasure in those who fear God, in those who hope in God's steadfast love.

Rev. Jim Beates, Presbyterian AIDS Network (PAN)

SUGGESTIONS FOR PREPARING AN HIV/AIDS SERMON AND SERVICE

- Reaffirm the dignity and humanity of those living with HIV/AIDS.
- Develop a HIV/AIDS liturgy that promotes awareness, education, and prevention, which also celebrates themes of life, reconciliation, justice, love and compassion.
- Remember that HIV/AIDS is a pandemic within other social diseases of: poverty, racism, xenophobia, gender inequalities, sexual violence, child abuse, and other justice issues like unequal distribution of resources and healthcare.
- Be sensitive to the fact that the millions of people living with HIV/AIDS worldwide are not only confronted daily with the detrimental physical effects of the disease, but also face overwhelming feelings of fear, despair, hopelessness, sadness and depression.
- Observe that confounding the physical, emotional and spiritual burdens and complexities of HIV/AIDS is the harmful shame and stigma associated with the disease. The results of this shame and stigma serve to further marginalize those with HIV/AIDS. Further, the shame and stigma associated with HIV/AIDS do not only affect those infected with the virus, but also are often displaced upon family, friends and relatives of those living with HIV/AIDS.
- In order to stand in solidarity with those infected and affected by HIV/AIDS, challenge and educate the church members to learn more about the scientific terminology, medical treatments, theology and pastoral care issues associated with HIV/AIDS.
- Encourage imagination and conversation around how the church and its members can be used to support those infected and affected with HIV/AIDS.

SUGGESTED SCRIPTURE PASSAGES

Psalm 103: 6-14	“The Holy One is Slow to Anger and Abounding in Steadfast Love.”
Psalm 142	“A Prayer for Deliverance”
Psalm 147:1-7	“Praise the Holy One”
Job 14:1-17	“The Holy One Watches Over all of Time”
Isaiah 43:19-20	“Perceive the Newness”

Isaiah 65:17-23	“The Glorious New Creation”
Matthew 25:31-46	“Treat the Least of These Like Christ”
Matthew 9:12	“Jesus the Physician of the Sick”
Matthew 11:28	“Fear the Lord Alone”
Mark 5:24-35	“Jesus Gives Voice to the Marginalized”
Luke 14: 15-24	“The Parable of the Great Banquet and All are Invited”
Romans 13:11	“Awakening the Moral Conscience”
James 2:1-8	“Show No Partiality and Love All”
I John 3:18-24	“Love One Another in Truth and Action”
I John 4:7-21	“Love as God has Loved”

POEMS

Poem #1

Christ has no body now on earth but yours;
 No Hands but yours;
 No feet but yours:
 Yours are the eyes through which Christ’s compassion looks out into the world;
 Yours are the feet with which he is to go about doing good;
 Yours are the hands with which he is to bless now.

St. Theresa of Avila

Poem #2

Look what it has done to me
 First it was my papa, then my mama followed
 Both gone for a journey
 A journey never to return
 Here I stand alone in the world
 With nothing to call a family
 With nowhere to call home
 An orphan I have become
 Yet I am so young
 Now my future is so uncertain
 But I weep for you
 I weep for us
 Weep for us
 Who are busy killing the future
 Creating a generation of AIDS orphans

*Fourth Presbyterian Church Advocacy and Mission and the
Center for Whole Health, a program of Chicago Lights at the Fourth
Presbyterian Church of Chicago.*

SUGGESTED MUSIC

“Balm in Gilead” PH# 394

“Spirit” PH# 319

“Spirit of the Living God” PH# 322

“Help us to accept each other” PH# 358

“I Want Jesus to Walk with Me” PH# 363

“Enemy of Apathy” by John L. Bell and Graham Maule, Publisher: Wild Goose

“Canticle of Turning” by Rory Cooney, Publisher: GIA