

Becoming HIV Positive

A resource for World AIDS Day 2005



The Church of Scotland HIV/AIDS Project





**A message from the
Moderator
of the General Assembly,
the Rt Rev David Lacy**

I have been pleased to endorse the Church of Scotland HIV/AIDS Project since its inception in 2002 and I believe we all need to understand better the challenge which HIV and AIDS pose, not just in Africa, not just outwith the UK, but here in Scotland too. It's a matter of us all becoming more HIV aware.

One of my hopes as I entered my year as Moderator was that I would get to see some of the work being supported by our own Church of Scotland HIV/AIDS Project. So I was delighted when this was suggested. After New Year 2006, Joan and I will be visiting Malawi, Kenya and Sudan to see some of the very different projects there.

On our return we shall visit projects in Scotland, which relate not just to HIV/AIDS, but to sexual health in general. The Scottish Executive's Strategy "Respect and Responsibility" recognises the important role that faith-based groups have to play in this and General Assembly 2004 agreed to "commend and support the Executive as it seeks to implement an appropriate Sexual Health Strategy for the well-being of the whole Scottish population."

In preparation for all this, I shall be hosting a day conference on Tuesday 13 December, to which I've invited leaders of the various Christian denominations and relief agencies, as well as leaders from other faith communities. We shall hear from distinguished speakers about HIV and AIDS in Scotland, around the world and the particular challenge to us as people of faith.

By the end of my year as Moderator, I hope to have encouraged the Kirk to become more HIV aware. Will **you** share with me in that task? This resource booklet will help you and your congregation focus on the issues around 1 December – World AIDS Day. With that added understanding, will you then pray for our visits and all the work of the Kirk's HIV/AIDS Project under the leadership of Nigel Pounce? Thank you.

See page 14 for a calendar and more details of the Moderator's visits

INTRODUCTION

The HIV/AIDS Project

This will be our fourth World AIDS Day – more than halfway through the five year life it was given by General Assembly in 2002.

At this year's Assembly, **the new Councils of the Kirk** were instructed to “seek imaginative ways of incorporating the goals of the Church of Scotland HIV/AIDS Project into their work.”

Congregations, members and adherents of the Kirk were requested “to prioritise the HIV/AIDS Project in their teaching and giving in order to continue and further extend its work.”

The Project Group itself was instructed – conscious of the growing challenge of the HIV/AIDS pandemic for the foreseeable future – “to consult widely and report to Assembly 2006 how the Kirk's visionary concern may be extended beyond the life of the present five-year project.”

Much has been achieved so far, not least the £450,000 raised by the **special appeal**. Many individuals and congregations know more about the problems of raising HIV awareness, some of the challenges of effective prevention programmes (the continuing debate around ABC - Abstinence, Be faithful, use a Condom), the demands of caring for those living with AIDS, especially the desperate need to improve access to anti-retroviral drugs. People have begun to understand that AIDS is not just in sub-Saharan Africa, but is worldwide with India and parts of the former Soviet Union experiencing very large numbers of new infections. It's also a Scottish issue, as this year's publication of the Scottish Executive's Sexual Health and Relationships strategy has shown.

So we could say that the Church of Scotland is becoming more HIV aware. But there is still a long way to go before people everywhere understand why HIV should matter to them. There is still stigma, discrimination and prejudice, which must be rooted out. There are still many who feel that this is not quite the kind of thing we should be speaking about in church and certainly not making the focus of our worship.

Becoming HIV Positive

The title of this resource challenges us to move beyond awareness to **Becoming HIV Positive**: to break the silence, get talking, start praying – not least about the difficult issues HIV raises. We can make a start on the Sunday before or after World AIDS Day (Thursday 1 December).

It's just three years since Nelson Mandela wore a new t-shirt at a rally in South Africa. “Emblazoned ‘HIV POSITIVE’, it has become far beyond South Africa's borders a symbol of the struggle for justice and reason and openness in the AIDS debate. It is worn casually and widely by many thousands of people – positive and negative – in marches, on the street, at work and at home. It has done more to lessen stigma than innumerable speeches and workshops and think-tanks... We are all HIV POSITIVE. We all need treatment to be made available.”¹



Photo © Eric Miller

¹ Edwin Cameron: *Witness to AIDS* p129-130 (London: I.B. Tauris, 2005)

Resources in this booklet

The **prayers and liturgies** in this booklet are taken from a variety of sources, but mainly *Africa Praying – A Handbook on HIV/AIDS Sensitive Sermon Guidelines and Liturgy* - edited by Musa Dube and published for the All Africa Conference of Churches by the World Council of Churches or <http://www.wcc-coe.org/wcc/what/mission/ehaia-pdf/africa-praying-eng.pdf> . They are designed to be inserted into your usual order of worship, including a service of Holy Communion.

The suggested **hymns** are from recently published *CH4 - The Church Hymnary - Fourth Edition*. they're grouped under five headings or elements which might all find a place in your service.

Congregations/ministers vary widely in their choice of **Bible readings** – some follow the Common Order lectionary, others choose their own. This year we suggest a few passages for consideration with brief suggestions on how to use them. Fuller notes are available from the office or on-line at <http://www.churchofscotland.org.uk/boards/worldmission/wmhivresources.htm>

Children and young people should be very much at the centre of our learning and sharing about HIV and AIDS. There are two specific activities suggested plus a useful website.

Other resources



Wristbands

Please order these from the office price £1 each. Please add £1 for post and packing for bulk orders up to 50 and £2 for 50+

Project Leaflets

Please order these new leaflets in bulk (which include a tear-off slip for donations) from the office – they are available from early November 2005. Distribute them to your congregation, Guild and local schools and community organisations. A contribution towards postage is appreciated, eg £2 for 50.

Red ribbons

While the Project office keeps a small stock of ribbons, please try and obtain them locally. Your local Health Board should be able to help – ask for the Resources Officer in the local Health Promotion Department. Their number should be in the phone directory and you could also find a contact through <http://www.show.scot.nhs.uk/indexhelp.htm> (click on A-Z index of SHOW sites)

Beyond World AIDS Day

This resource is not date-specific – nor is the HIV virus. The mother of a young Edinburgh woman who had died from AIDS commented: “It’s nice that people do something positive about HIV and remember those who’ve died once a year. But for me every day is a World AIDS Day.”

Becoming HIV Positive is a process. Continue to have an HIV/AIDS focus in your worship (especially to support the Moderator in his visits) – and your congregational giving.

LITURGY AND PRAYER

An Introduction

(The bullet points could each be read by a different person for emphasis)

World AIDS Day is a special event for churches. By celebrating this day through worship, prayer, praise, word and testimony, individual Christians and whole congregations can

- Acquire spiritual and social strength and resources to combat HIV and AIDS and its causes.
- Break down barriers of prejudice, fear, stigma, and complacency which still hinder open discussion and practical action against the pandemic.
- Consolidate our commitment as a caring church without walls in all our activities.

Listening to God's word and the discipline of prayer have always been very important dimensions of our spirituality. They are vital still today as we face the increased burden of disease, poverty, famine and conflict among our nations, in our communities, within our families.

World AIDS Day gives us both the opportunity and responsibility to ask for and find God's mercy, grace and help in this critical time of need.

A Call to Worship and Introduction

Leader I am because we are.

All We are because I am.

Leader No person is an island.

All Our God is the triune God, Immanuel, God with us.

Leader The HIV/AIDS epidemic has struck fear in our hearts.
It is fear of getting infection of an incurable disease,
fear of suffering for a long time before one's death,
fear of dying and dying alone,
fear of coming out with one's health status and getting rejected,
fear of facing one's shattered dreams,
fear of leaving behind young and growing children.

All Fear. Fear everywhere.

Leader This fear has bred stigma and discrimination
and the isolation of those who are infected and who are already sick.
It has hindered the provision of quality care.
It has hindered compassion just when it is needed most.

All Help us to reach out to those who are suffering,
enter their places of pain and brokenness,
seek out ways to change their situation.
May we all be transformed by you, our compassionate God.

A Responsive Prayer

Leader God of Mercy, we recognize that the church of Jesus Christ has AIDS.

All God of Love, we recognize you as the one who heals us.

Leader God our Creator, we acknowledge the varied ways you heal your church.

All God our Wisdom, open our eyes to see the wonders of your healing.

Leader God of Compassion, we see you taking time for the least of the society to bring them healing.

All God our Teacher, give us the courage to follow your foot-steps and bring healing to all people in our society.

Leader We seek your forgiveness where we have failed you.

All We receive your forgiveness as we go out to bring healing to your people through the power of the Holy Spirit. In Jesus' name, Amen.

A Prayer from Uganda

Leader Before the fear of HIV/AIDS we ask for the courage of love, that compassion may triumph over hysteria, reason over hatred, joy over despair.

All We ask for courage.

Leader In the presence of HIV/AIDS we ask for perseverance in love, that the bonds of kinship and friendship, the bonds of humanity, may prove strong and true.

All We ask for perseverance.

Leader In the reality of HIV/AIDS we ask for healing, the healing of the body and the spirit, the healing of a blighted future.

All We ask for healing.

Leader In the extremity of HIV/AIDS we give thanks for those whose lives speak love, whose acts dispel prejudice, whose joy overcomes fear,

All We give thanks.

A Prayer for Holistic Healing

(This can be led by 10 different people or by a group of two or three)

Leader 1 Heal us from the bodily pains of HIV/AIDS,
That deplete our immunity
And leave us open to opportunistic infections.
Heal us Lord.

All *(Clap hands twice)*
Heal us Lord. Have mercy on us.

- Leader 2** Heal us from our broken hearts and grief,
That continues to pain our spirits and minds
And leave us empty about the meaning of life.
Heal us Lord.
- All** (*Clap hands twice*)
Heal us Lord. Have mercy on us.
- Leader 3** Heal us from psychological pains of HIV/AIDS,
That engulf us in fear and hopelessness
And lead us to die even before the virus kills us.
Heal us Lord.
- All** (*Clap hands twice*)
Heal us Lord. Have mercy on us.
- Leader 4** Heal us from HIV/AIDS social stigma and discrimination
That leads us to uncompassionate acts of isolation
And failure to provide quality care and prevention.
Heal us Lord.
- All** (*Clap hands twice*)
Heal us Lord. Have mercy on us.
- Leader 5** Heal us from unhealthy family relations,
That tolerate unfaithfulness and hurt family
And spreads HIV/AIDS to our loved ones.
Heal us Lord.
- All** (*Clap hands twice*)
Heal us Lord. Have mercy on us.
- Leader 6** Heal us from unhealthy gender relations,
That expose partners and spouses to HIV/AIDS infection
And leaves women powerless from protecting themselves.
Heal us Lord.
- All** (*Clap hands twice*)
Heal us Lord. Have mercy on us.
- Leader 7** Heal us from poverty that exposes millions to HIV/AIDS.
Heal us from exploitative social structures,
That condemn many to poverty and expose them to infection.
Heal us Lord.
- All** (*Clap hands twice*)
Heal us Lord. Have mercy on us.
- Leader 8** Heal us from violence that spreads HIV/AIDS.
Heal us from ethnic and civil wars.
Heal us from domestic violence and the rape of children.
Heal us Lord.
- All** (*Clap hands twice*)
Heal us Lord. Have mercy on us.
- Leader 9** Heal us from national corruption,
That embezzles funds, tramples on human rights
And denies quality health services to its citizens.
Heal us Lord.

All *(Clap hands twice)*
Heal us Lord. Have mercy on us.

Leader 10 Heal us from international injustice,
That sets up exploitative economic policies of trade
And denies millions access to HIV/AIDS drugs.
Heal us Lord.

All *(Clap hands twice)*
Heal us Lord. Have Mercy on us.
Heal us with your resurrection power.
Cause us to rise from fear and hopelessness.
Cause us to rise into your resurrection hope.
Cause us to reclaim our right to life and to quality life.
Heal us Lord, fill us with the joy of your Spirit
And your peace that surpasses all understanding. Amen.

A Prayer of Dedication

(In the second paragraph 'their' could be changed to 'our', etc and said by all the congregation)

Creator God, in this HIV/AIDS era, the harvest is plentiful and the labourers are few.
We thank you for the few labourers that are carrying heavy burdens.
Renew their strength and energy to serve.
Here, then are your people, more servants.
They have heard you calling, "whom shall I send, who shall go for me?"
They have heard you say "Who shall undertake HIV/AIDS prevention and provision of care to the sick for me?"
They have heard you say, "The harvest is plentiful, but the labourers are few."
They have come forward to you.
They are saying, "Here we are, send us Lord."

We dedicate them to you and your care.
Creator God, take their *(our)* hands and feet.
Send them *(us)* to every home and corner where they *(we)* are needed.
Take their *(our)* hearts and minds and fill them with compassionate energy.
Take their *(our)* eyes and ears and help them to see pain and hear the cries of all who suffer.
Anoint them *(us)* now and fill them *(us)* with your Holy Spirit, your Spirit of power and fire.
We thank you that you have already heard our prayers. Amen.

(The leader gives a symbol - it could be a red ribbon or a Project wristband - to each person as a reminder of their pledge to God and their dedication to serve in the HIV/AIDS struggle)

A Commissioning

Go with the God of compassion.
Go with Immanuel, the God With Us.
Go with the Comforter, the Spirit of power and fire.
Go forth to liberate creation from oppression.
Go forth to heal and comfort God's people. Amen.

A Prayer to be said as a candle of hope is lit

(This can be said by all or by three representatives of the congregation)

Lord God, on World AIDS Day:

We repent of our denial, complacency and failure towards the HIV/AIDS epidemic.

We commit ourselves afresh

to communicating God's grace to the world;

to ministering, responding to and identifying with those in need.

We give up our feelings of self-righteousness, our judgmental attitudes,

our faulty beliefs about HIV and AIDS and the people who live with the virus.

Open our hearts to change and receive forgiveness.

Give enabling power to those who will bring change

to individuals, families, institutions, communities, nations and the world.

Enable us to promote positive examples of righteous, safe and healthy living
in our cultural, social, sexual, reproductive, political and spiritual lives.

Strengthen our families, communities, and nations

by removing neglect, conflict and individualism.

As we light this candle as a sign of our re-dedication to HIV/AIDS work

help us to listen, to learn and to live.

In Jesus' name we pray. Amen.

HYMNS *(all numbers from CH4 – some may be found in other hymnals)*

Gathering

496 Humbly in your sight

773 Jesus tawa pano

The activity of God in all human experience

159 Lord for the years

168 God weeps at love withheld

Advent hope

273 O come, O come

284 Hope is a candle

Healing

721 We lay our broken world

724 Christ's is the world

Death & Resurrection

727 In the bulb there is a flower

730 From the falter of breath

PSALMS *(all from CH4)*

21 Psalm 25 Lord teach me all your ways

22 Psalm 27 The Lord's my light and saving health

87 Psalm 130 Lord from the depths

READINGS

Ezra 1:1-11

Re-building Hope

A classic passage emphasising the centrality of a sense of call and mission for God's people to re-build the Temple. A similar conviction is needed to address the HIV/AIDS pandemic and re-build hope – in sub-Saharan Africa and worldwide.

Isaiah 65: 17-23

God's promise for the future

God's people in exile facing an uncertain future with a sense of hopelessness are given the vision of a new heaven and a new earth. Those living with HIV/AIDS need a similar word of hope.

Ezekiel 37: 1-13

Prophecy to these bones!

God wants to transform the valley of death into a valley of life and hope. The very space of death and hopelessness can and will be transformed. How can that apply to Africa? How will the desperately needed anti-retroviral drugs reach those who need them?

Matthew 10: 37-42 (cf Mark 9: 33-37)

Working against stigma & discrimination

Being a Christian in the Scotland of 2005 is not easy. How do we face up to the cost of discipleship **and** the cost of being open and welcoming to those who've been marginalised and hurt because of the silence or stigma surrounding their HIV?

Mark 5: 21-43

Healing and hope for children?

Children are orphaned, bereaved, exploited, abused and face an uncertain future – apart from the promise of poverty and possible death from AIDS themselves. How do we bring healing and hope to the children of the world?

I Corinthians 11: 23-24

Communion – count me in

If your service is one of Holy Communion, reflect on its meaning for those across the world – not least in Scotland – who feel excluded from society (including the fellowship of the church) because of HIV-related stigma and discrimination.

Hebrews 6: 16-20

Jesus the High Priest in the context of AIDS

People are drawn to Jesus in many different ways in the writings of the New Testament. Some are drawn to his personality, his words, his stories, the doctrine developed by the early church. Are there ways that the picture of the High Priest in Hebrews can offer particular insights and hope to those living with HIV or AIDS?

*(See supplement for suggestions on how these themes might be developed
– details of how to obtain this on page 4)*

IDEAS FOR YOUNG PEOPLE

For older young people (12+)...

An estimated 11.8 million young people (aged 15–24) are living with HIV. Each day, nearly 6,000 more are infected, as well as 2,000 infants who contract the virus from their mothers during pregnancy or birth, or through breastfeeding. And 14 million children worldwide have lost one or both parents to AIDS.

But young people are not just at the centre of the crisis. They - **you** - are crucial to a lasting solution. In areas where HIV infection rates are levelling off or actually declining, it's mainly because young men and women are changing their behaviour. And young people are also taking a lead in passing on the vital information that prompts such change.

That's from UNICEF's website at http://www.unicef.org/voy/explore/aids/explore_aids.php

- this excellent resource includes an interactive game to help young people explore relationships, as well as a range of information including a section on 'How to avoid HIV'. This uses the ABC model - Abstinence, Being faithful, Condom use – which is also at the heart of the Church of Scotland Youth/Christian Aid Peer Education Programme. If you're interested in how your youth group can get involved in this just contact Val Brown at ybrown@christian-aid.org or 0141 221 1627.

Stories from the UNICEF webpage for young people of all ages...

"Since the death of my father, we have been living with our grandparents. I earn 50 or 60 rupees a day by selling vegetables or pulling the rickshaw. I have three younger brothers. I want to study, but my grandfather says he cannot afford to keep us in the house unless I contribute my family's share." 16-year-old boy orphaned by AIDS, India

Justin, who lives in Malawi, is only 14, but since he lost his parents to AIDS he has had to look after his 10-year-old brother and 9-year-old sister. "The main problem we have without our parents is finding food," he says. Without parents or guardians, Justin had to drop out of school to earn a living, carrying food for merchants so he and his brother and sister could have enough to eat.

In Ethiopia, Meseret, 15, her brother Besufekad, 11, and younger sister Tezerash Tilahun, 3, also lost both their parents to AIDS. So they moved in with their half-brother and his wife. "But I saw that things were not good," says Masresha, a local teacher. "The half-brother is poor and does not have steady work. He also drinks, and the children told me that he beat them. His wife made them work hard, and they had no time for school." Things came to a head when Masresha realized that the half-brother was making arrangements for Meseret to get married without her consent. So Masresha packed up the children's few belongings and moved them into her own home, where they have been living ever since.

And some quotes from young people living with HIV in Britain (From *Voices of Young People – CWAC (Children with AIDS Charity) www.cwac.org*): "My parents sat me down and they told me when I was about 7 that I had a bug and there was no cure..." "It is boring always taking medicine and being woken up in the morning to take them – especially on holidays..." "I feel sad that I can't tell and have to keep it a secret because I know people won't want to be around me or like me..." "People need to know more so they understand what it feels like to live with HIV..."

These stories could form the basis for discussion with both Primary and Secondary age groups.

For the younger ones...

On pages 12 & 13 you'll find a *Word Search* and a *Prayer Wheel* which can be photocopied (why not enlarge the *Prayer Wheel* to A3 – more space for drawing or sticking pictures!). You'll find it helpful to have copies of the Project leaflet (see page 4) as a source of information and pictures to copy or cut out.

The Church of Scotland HIV/AIDS Project Word Search



Can you find some of the countries
where we support HIV prevention and care projects?
(Look out – some of the names turn corners!)

S	S	T	B	A	N	G	L
U	C	O	H	S	E	D	A
D	N	O	I	S	R	M	P
A	I	A	T	I	A	D	D
N	G	S	S	L	E	N	T
E	E	O	A	P	A	A	I
G	R	W	I	L	D	N	N
Y	I	S	I	P	A	K	D
P	A	A	N	T	S	I	I
T	H	O	W	A	N	!	A

When you have found 10 countries, there will be 19 letters left – and an !
Reading left to right, they spell out an important message

___ / ___

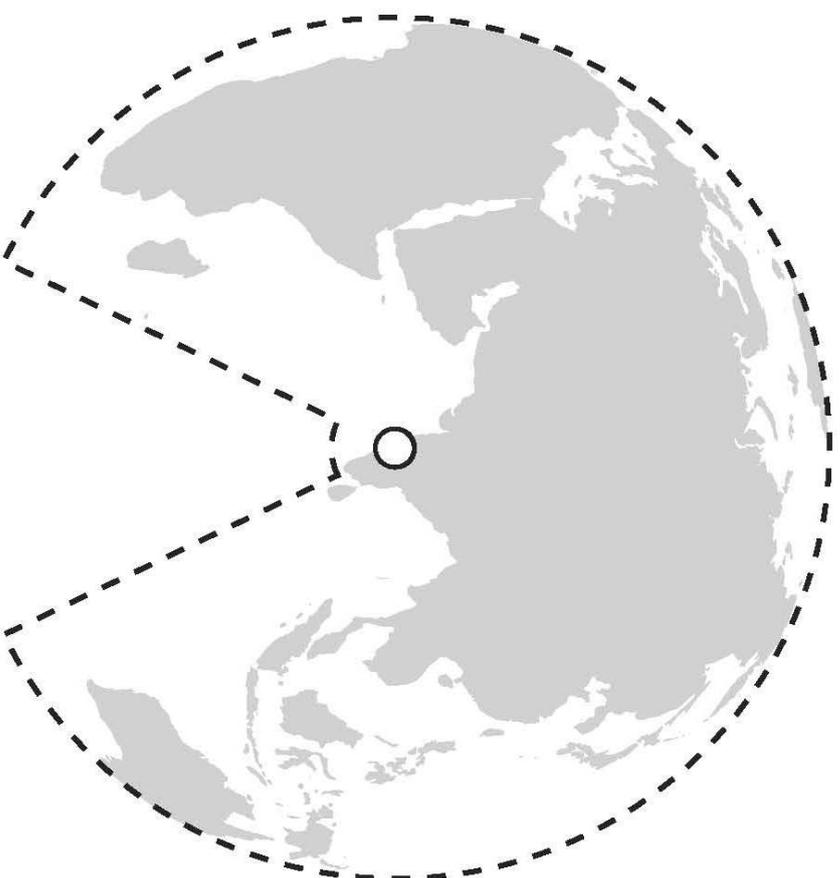
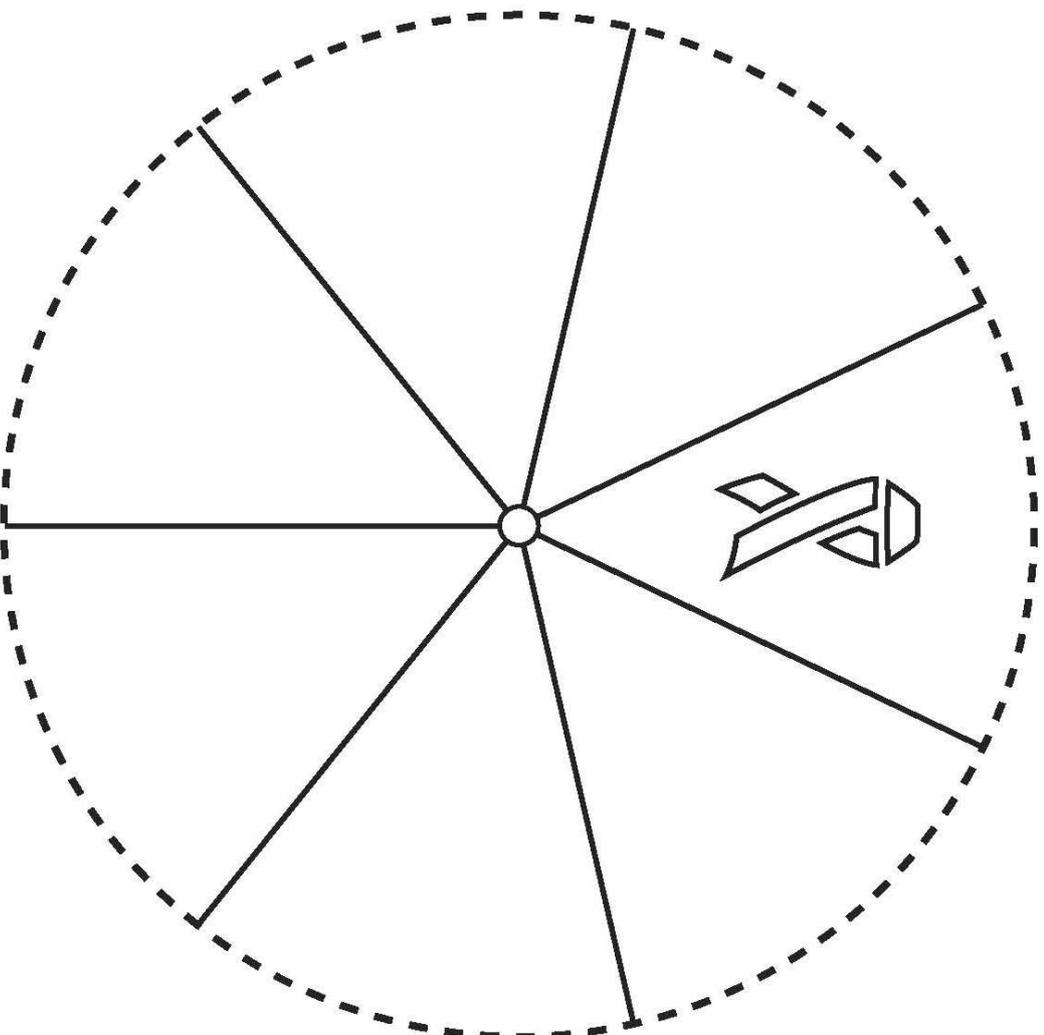
___ / ___ / ___ !

Did you find Bangladesh, Egypt, India, Israel, Malawi, Nigeria, Pakistan, Scotland, Sudan and Thailand?

The Church of Scotland HIV/AIDS Project Prayer Wheel

Instructions

1. Write a day of the week at the top of each segment of the AIDS ribbon circle
2. Write a prayer or stick/draw a picture in each segment
3. Cut out both circles following the dotted line.
4. Make holes in the centre of both circles with the world on top.
5. Link them with a paper fastener or similar (no sharp edges for young children!)
6. Get praying!





THE MODERATOR'S HIV/AIDS PROGRAMME

13 Dec 2005 Christian and other faith leaders meet in Edinburgh to consider the practical and theological challenge

4 Jan 2006 Leaves for Africa
 5-8 Visits projects in Blantyre Synod CCAP, Malawi
 9-11 Visits projects in Livingstonia Synod CCAP, Malawi
 12 Travels to Kenya
 13-14 Rest weekend
 15 - 21 Visits projects in PCEA, Kenya and PCOS, Sudan including opening the HIV/AIDS project partners consultation at Limuru on Mon 16 and present for closing on 19/20
 22 Returns to Scotland

7-8 Feb Edinburgh
 14 Glasgow

Among the projects the Moderator and his wife Joan will visit:

Blantyre Tichintenji Widows Association

Ekwendeni Hospital AIDS Programme

Livingstonia Synod Youth Advocacy

St Paul's Theological College, Limuru – community-based training

PCOS HIV/AIDS Youth Awareness

Waverley Care, Edinburgh

Positive Voice, Edinburgh

Barnardo's Riverside Project, Glasgow



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