

World AIDS Day
1st December 2005

**STOP AIDS: KEEP THE
PROMISE**

A liturgy to be used in places of worship around the world

Jointly produced by

Christian Conference of Asia (CCA)

Hong Kong Christian Council (HKCC)

St. John's Cathedral HIV Education Centre

Worship Preparation

RED RIBBON:

- The red ribbons are distributed to each congregation member as they enter the church/chapel along with the other worship literature.
- A large red ribbon is processed through the worship area and placed on the altar.
- Each congregation member exchanges the red ribbon with his/her neighbor.
- The congregation pin the red ribbon to themselves.

VOICES OF THE UNHEARD

- A youth, woman and man from the congregation may read on behalf of each of those voices from Thailand, Indonesia and Myanmar.

HYMNS:

- Hymns that are familiar with the congregation may be chosen.
- Recommended hymns (Appendix 1)

OFFERTORY:

- The congregation may identify families infected/affected by HIV and AIDS or an organization or a health related ministry working on HIV and AIDS.
- The leader may specifically mention that the special offertory will be donated to the family/organization/health related ministry.
- The choir can sing a special hymn or have a short video presentation on HIV/AIDS.

AN ACT OF REMEMBRANCE AND THANKSGIVING:

- Four candles should be placed at the altar at the beginning of the service.
- A child, youth, adult and an elderly person can be identified to light the four candles.

INTERCESSORY PRAYERS:

- Members of the congregation can be identified to represent the six voices.

PREFACE

RELIGIOUS LEADERS' COMMITMENT TOWARDS HIV/AIDS ISSUES Statement of Commitment by Religious Leaders

15th International AIDS Conference, Bangkok, Thailand, 11-16 July 2004

The tragic toll of the HIV and AIDS pandemic, as well as its continuous and rapid spread in most parts of the world, brings compelling urgency to the call for new commitment by people of faith to the goal of “**Access for All**”.

The HIV and AIDS crisis is bringing us together because we are all living with HIV and AIDS. We need to share knowledge, understanding and experience from our various religious communities so that our efforts become more and more effective and inclusive. Through this, we will seek to establish a new culture of interfaith cooperation, respecting the uniqueness within our traditions while focusing on our shared values of human dignity and human rights.

Have religious communities done enough to respond to the urgent challenges posed by HIV and AIDS to individuals, communities, and the global human family? As leaders in religious communities, assembled for the 15th International AIDS Conference, in Bangkok, on 11-16 July 2004, we acknowledge with much regret that quite often our response has been one of prejudice, ignorance, fear, and judgmental attitudes.

We are determined to work together and within our communities to:

- Promote the dignity, equality, and rights of all people;
- Discuss openly and accurately the basic facts about the HIV and AIDS and about all effective means of prevention;
- Work to eliminate the root causes of the HIV and AIDS pandemic including gender inequality, prejudice against those whose way of life or sexual orientation is different from the majority community, systemic injustice, and unequal distribution of wealth;
- Overcome silence, stigma, discrimination, denial, and fear regarding HIV and AIDS;
- Reject the negative statements by some faith leaders that AIDS is a form of divine punishment or retribution;

- Advocate for expanded resources to fight against HIV and AIDS;
- Document “good practices” and support research to identify more effective means of prevention and treatment;
- Attain “**access for all**” – to effective preventive education and knowledge, comprehensive care and treatment, and full inclusion in the community.

Our religious communities bring rich experience and unique strengths to fulfill these commitments. Specifically, we will carry out the following actions;

- We will implement policies within our structures and institutions in order to combat every tendency to marginalize people living with or affected by HIV and AIDS as either employees or members within our communities.
- We will advocate for and with people living with or affected by HIV and AIDS in order to obtain lower prices for both medications and laboratory tests and to ensure access to the full range of education, counseling, voluntary testing and care.
- We will call upon those holding political office, in collaboration with all members of the global human family, to fulfill the grave responsibility to make the dream of “**Access To All**” into an everyday reality in all parts of the world, among all groups of people, and at every level of the socio-economic spectrum and to maintain strict, enhanced and transparent accountability in this regard.
- We will ensure, through educational activities and community gatherings, the inclusion of accurate information about ways to prevent the further spread of HIV.
- We will commit our diverse structures of health care, ranging from highly specialized services to locally-based village clinics, as well as our systems of education, social and community development, to implement these strategies in a comprehensive, universal, and equitable manner.
- We will dedicate additional funds from the resources of our own religious communities in order to scale up our respective contributions to the struggle against the HIV pandemic, and pledge careful stewardship and responsible use of the funds entrusted us by donors from our own communities and from the international community.
- We will involve people living with or directly affected by HIV, many of whom are members of our own religious communities, in the response to this pandemic.

- We will give priority attention addressing the practices within our religious traditions that increase the vulnerability of women and girls who also carry the greatest burden of response in this pandemic.
- We will promote community-based responses to the special needs to children orphaned and made vulnerable by HIV and AIDS.
- We will promote preaching and teaching about HIV in our houses of worship and will encourage the designation of special days and / or weeks of prayer and other religious observances to focus on HIV and AIDS.
- We commit ourselves to monitor and evaluate our own progress toward accomplishing the goals that we have articulated in this statement.
- HIV and AIDS know no boundaries. All of our religious communities are living with HIV and AIDS, and yet a common thread in our beliefs is hope inspired by faith. We will not rest until the promise of “**Access For All**” and the hope of a world without HIV and AIDS is fulfilled.

WORLD AIDS DAY LITURGY 2005

A Moment of silence with reflective music

Call to Worship:

Leader: Today we join people all over the world as we come to remember those who have died and those who are suffering through HIV/AIDS. Today we also remember those who are working to stop the AIDS pandemic; those who are carers; those who mourn and those who are working to against stigma and discrimination.

According to UNAIDS estimates, there were 37.2 million adults and 2.2 million children living with HIV at the end of 2004, and during the year 4.9 million new people became infected with the virus. Around half of all people who become infected with HIV do so before they are 25 and are killed by AIDS before they are 35. 95% of the total number of people with HIV/AIDS live in the developing world. But HIV still remains a threat to people all aged and nationalities.

“Stop AIDS. Keep the Promise”

This is the theme of World AIDS Day 2005. “**Keep the Promise**” is an appeal to governments and policy makers to ensure that they meet the targets they have agreed to in the fight against HIV and AIDS. Some of the most important of these promises are contained in the UNGASS Declaration and the 3 by 5 initiative.

The UNGASS Declaration of Commitment was signed by all 189 members of the UN in June 2001. The governments of these countries committed themselves to taking action on HIV and AIDS in the fields of leadership, prevention, care and support, treatment, reducing vulnerability, and human rights. The following targets were set for the end of 2005:

- Reduce HIV prevalence by 25% among men and women aged 15-24 in the most affected countries.
- Ensure that at least 90% of young people aged 15 to 24 have access to the information, education and services necessary to develop the life skills required to reduce their vulnerability to HIV infection.
- Reduce the proportion of infants infected with HIV by 20% by increasing access to

services, which prevent mother-to-child transmission.

- Increase annual spending on HIV and AIDS to 47-10 billion in low and middle-income countries and those countries experiencing or at risk of experiencing rapid expansion of HIV epidemics.

THE GREETING:

Leader: The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you all.

All: And also with you.

Leader: May the God who calls us to unity and the fullness of life and love unite you all.

All: Amen

EXCHANGE OF RED RIBBON:

Leader:

The Red Ribbon is the international symbol of AIDS awareness; a symbol of respect for HIV positive people and people living with AIDS, and it reminds us all of the constant need to keep up with the fight against AIDS.

It was created in early 1991 by Visual AIDS in New York for a global symbol in the fight against AIDS. A symbol for solidarity and tolerance with those often discriminated by the public – the people living with HIV and AIDS. In the style of the yellow ribbons, which were popular in the USA at the time as a symbol for awareness of those soldiers fighting in the gulf war, the “Red Ribbon “ was born.

The Red Ribbon is...

- “red” like love, as a symbol of passion and tolerance towards those affected.
- “red” like blood, representing the pain caused by the many people that

died of AIDS.

- “red” like the **anger** about the helplessness by which we are facing a disease for which there is still no chance for a cure
- “red” as a sign of **warning** not to carelessly ignore one of the biggest problems of our time.

Wearing the Red Ribbon is your first step in the fight against AIDS.

Each congregation member will now exchange a red ribbon with his/her neighbour. Every member will then have a red ribbon pinned to himself/herself.

THE GATHERING PRAYER:

We begin in silence. During the silence, a large red ribbon is processed through the worship area and placed on the altar.

Leader: God who comes alongside and lives within, we thank you for the privilege of being together at this time and in this place.

All: We thank you.

Leader: We pray that your love will unite us into a community of grace and discovery.

Please cleanse from us anything that would sap our strength for togetherness. Free us from negative imaginations and the barriers that sometimes keep us apart. In this time refresh in us the dream of a better world and put before us new possibilities for service.

All: Lord, hear us.

Leader: Renew in us your compassion so that we may be a people with loving purposes. We come together to be your alleluia in a troubled world.

All: Amen

BIBLE READINGS:

Old Testament: Jeremiah 29:4-14

New Testament: Luke 5: 12 – 13

Voices of the unheard:

Leader:

Let us now hear the voices of our sisters and brothers who
are living with HIV and AIDS.

Voice from Myanmar:

Although HIV/AIDS has been acknowledged in Burma (Myanmar) since 1990, the statistics are not clear. Government figures put the overall HIV prevalence rate at less than 0.5 per cent, while some non-government agencies suggest it is nearer to two per cent. In high-risk groups such as injecting drug-users, sex workers and seafarers, the infection rate may be as high as 40 or 50 per cent. While it is true that in the 1990s HIV was mainly transmitted by people crossing the border from Thailand, transmission now occurs within Burma, particularly in the capital Yangon and in Mandalay.

Christian and Buddhist groups are increasingly engaged in HIV prevention and care. For Chairman of the Rattana Metta Organization in Yangon, it was a natural progression from his previous work on leprosy.

He comments: 'The leprosy campaign has been very effective and numbers have fallen to 4,000 for the whole country. On the other hand Myanmar people are quite reserved and are not aware of the effects of HIV. There was no organisation among the Buddhists involved in it, so I wanted to set one up. I also believe, from my leprosy work, that HIV-positive people are facing the same problem of discrimination and we have the strategies to deal with it. We don't feel any religious barriers between different faiths. We're all working for the welfare of humanity. Only the strategy or approach may be different because we're coming from different perspectives.'

Voice from Thailand:

I am Saengchan Inchai living with my daughter in a rural village in Chiang Mai. The experience that I had been through helped me to strengthen and build myself and I felt that I should be of help to others who are facing pain and suffering. I had an opportunity to join a group of people facing similar situations. We called ourselves

“Glum Kwam Wang Mai” (New Hope Group). This gave me hope for a better future, hope for better medicine, hope for an opportunity within the community and many other things. Our group members visited families who had lost hope and helped them find happiness. I wanted to help the community as much as possible.

Saengchan Inchai, 38, Chiang Mai

Voice from Indonesia:

I had to go to a medical institution to have a general medical check up. The result showed that I was HIV positive. I was afraid about social stigma to people living with HIV and AIDS. One day I met someone who was HIV positive who gave me support and helped me face the reality of my life. We always share about our power, experience and hope to deal with the virus.

Now I have a community that always supports me and the people living with HIV and AIDS. I am open to talk about my status and speak up at any campaign or meeting on HIV/AIDS especially with younger people who use drugs with needles.

Ginan, 23 years, Indonesia

Voices from Myanmar:

‘At first we weren’t brave enough to take on this job. But we realised we had to do something, and slowly, through personal contact with patients, we found we had more compassion and love. Now we want to do more. It’s God’s love that keeps us going. When you receive God’s love it has to flow over onto other people. And when you provide education, positive people are able to mix with other people. They no longer feel isolated and alone.’

Gladys Dive and Paw Lu Lu, HIV health workers in the Anglican diocese of Hpa’an

FOR REFLECTION:

Guideline for Reflection (Jeremiah 29: 4 –14):

Jeremiah is writing to the people who have been taken away from Jerusalem to live in exile in Babylon. He assures them that God has promised that their time in exile is limited

(v10) and encourages them in the meantime to take a positive attitude to their new life in Babylon (v5-7). Then we hear God's wonderful promise of his continuing presence with them and of a future full of hope.

Many people living with HIV around the world continue to suffer rejection in their churches, mosques or temples, even though these are the places where they should feel most confident of finding loving acceptance. Some of them have also had their hopes cruelly raised by religious groups promising 'a cure for AIDS'.

The 'prophets and diviners' of Jeremiah's day were equally destructive, crushing people's hopes or giving them false hopes that were bound to be dashed. But Jeremiah draws them back to God, emphasizing that in God's plans there's no place for harm.

HYMN

AN ACT OF REMEMBRANCE AND THANKSGIVING:

Leader: God our Father, we thank you that you have made each one of us in your own image and given us gifts and talents with which to serve you. We thank you for those whose lives we have shared and whom we remember this night. We thank you for the good we have experienced in them and for the blessing they have been to us. Give us faith to leave them in your care, confident in your promises.

Leader: We live in much darkness. We are often uncertain. We are sometimes afraid.

All: In the darkness, we light a candle of hope.

(First candle is lit.)

Leader: We all have sorrows. We have known pain. Each of us carry special regrets.

All: In our palm, we light a candle of forgiveness.

(Second candle is lit.)

Leader: We are sometimes lonely, and the world seems cold and hard.

All: In our loneliness, we light a candle of love.

(Third candle is lit.)

Leader: We have known awe, wonder, mystery and glimmerings of perfection in our imperfect world.

All: **In our wonder, we light a candle of praise.**
(Fourth candle is lit.)

Leader: May our separate lights become one flame, that together we may be nourished by its glow.

(Source: An Interfaith Celebration of Love)

THE LORD'S PRAYER: (All)

Our Father in Heaven,
Hallowed be your Name,
Your Kingdom come,
Your will be done on earth as in Heaven.
Give us today our daily bread.
Forgive us our sins as we forgive those who sin against us.
Save us from the time of trial, and deliver us from evil.
For the Kingdom, the power and the glory are Yours
now and forever. Amen.

OFFERTORY AND DOXOLOGY:

This special offering is taken in support of families infected or affected by HIV and AIDS/organization/health related ministry supporting the cause of HIV and AIDS.

INTERCESSORY PRAYERS:

Voice 1: God our loving Father, your son Jesus chose to be vulnerable in order to understand and identify himself with us. We are wounded in many ways and we implore you to heal us and make us healers with you, to help heal our broken world.

All: Lord in your mercy, hear our prayer.

Voice 2: We pray for the leaders of the nations and for all faith leaders. Given them courage and strength to take a lead in working to prevent the further spread of HIV and to care for those affected.

(Especially we pray for....)

All: Lord in your mercy, hear our prayer.

Voice 3: We pray for young people, in their vitality and idealism. Bless them with good friends to help them accept themselves in all their vulnerability and challenge them with high ideals.
(Especially we pray for....)

All: Lord in your mercy, hear our prayer.

Voice 4: We pray for those who are sick and in pain, especially those affected by HIV/AIDS; may they experience your love through each one of us; may they find meaning and purpose in their lives and inspire others who suffer.
(Especially we pray for)

All: Lord in your mercy, hear our prayer.

Voice 5: We pray for all those who work for development and justice; may they not be discouraged as they struggle to create a healthier world.
(Especially we pray for)

All: Lord in your mercy, hear our prayer.

Voice 6: Lord, we thank you that you have made all of us in your own image and likeness. Help us to be sensitive to one another and to build healthy and caring communities in your world. We ask this through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

CLOSING HYMN

CLOSING PRAYER AND BENEDICTION

All:

Encircle us, O God. Keep love within, hatred out.

Encircle us, O God. Keep joy within, despair out.

Encircle us, O God. Keep peace within, disharmony out.

Encircle us, O God. Keep hopes within, discouragement out.

Your presence is in us. Your presence is around us. Your presence is love.
Your presence is in us. Your presence is around us. Your presence is joy.
Your presence is in us. Your presence is around us. Your presence is peace.
Your presence is in us. Your presence is around us. Your presence is hope.
Encircle us, O God, and may we go out in peace. Amen

Leader:

Go forth into this broken and hurting world with the blessing of the Father, the healing authority of the Son Jesus Christ, and the power and guidance of the Holy Spirit. Go forth and bring healing with you wherever you go!

All: In the name of Christ Amen.

Appendix I

List of recommended Hymns:

1. "There is a balm of Gilead"
2. "For such a time as this"
3. "When I need a neighbor"
4. "I the Lord of Sea and Sky"
5. "Christ's is the World ~~~A Touching Place"
6. "I danced in the morning ~~~ Lord of the Dance"

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT OF COPYRIGHTS

1. "A Prayer Book for Australia". Copyright 1995, The Anglican Church of Australia Trust Corporation.
2. Christ Church Anglican Cathedral Diocese of Newcastle Australia, World AIDS Day Service 2001.
3. Christian Aid
4. www.avert.org/manstory.htm

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