



Ecumenical Advocacy Alliance HIV and AIDS Campaign 2005-2008

Keep the Promise: Biblical and Theological Reflections

The following reflections and biblical texts may help you develop sermons and worship services on the HIV and AIDS campaign theme, "Keep the Promise":

1. Keep the Promise: A vision of a Christian response to HIV and AIDS

In order to accomplish this vision, we must be acutely sensitive to the Promise that was sealed in the Covenant between the Creator and God's People ("... if you hearken to my voice and keep my covenant, you shall be my special possession, dearer to me than all other people, though all the earth is mine" – Exodus 19:4-8), the Promise renewed by God's Son, Jesus Christ ("I have come so that you may have life and have it to the full" – John 10:10), and in the many promises made by people of faith as they face the challenge of everyday life in contemporary society ("working for the common good", "equitable distribution of goods", "respect for the dignity of each and every person"). We should all reflect on the promises of our governmental leaders ("basic social safety net to be assured by the State", "protection of the poorest and most vulnerable") through the UNGASS Declaration of Commitments, Millennium Development Goals, G-8 communiqué, and other pledges.

In addition to the personal and family-based suffering wrought by HIV and AIDS, this pandemic brings heightened awareness of the wide gap between the promises mentioned above and contemporary life in a time of AIDS. Millions of people lack access to essential medicines, let alone the combination anti-retroviral treatment needed to prolong life among those living with HIV and AIDS. Poverty, lack of access to integral human development, and gender inequity can be counted among the root causes for vulnerability among millions of people newly infected by HIV each year – the vast majority of whom live in developing countries. HIV-related stigma and discrimination remains rampant in all parts of the world.

Christian people must heed Jesus' call to put their faith into action ("... if I washed your feet – I who am teacher and Lord – then you must wash each other's feet ... as I have done, so you must do" – John 13:13-15). Beneficiaries of God's Promise to walk with people of faith, they have an obligation to keep their own promises in helping to build God's Reign as a place of peace, respect, and justice, and in monitoring progress in fulfillment of the world's leaders to Stop AIDS through adequate funding and action in response to the pandemic.

Rev. Robert J. Vitillo, Caritas Internationalis

Ecumenical Advocacy Alliance

150, route de Ferney
PO Box 2100
1211 Geneva 2
Switzerland

Alianza Ecu mica de Acci3n Mundial

150, route de Ferney
Apartado postal 2100
1211 Ginebra 2
Suiza

Alliance Oecum nique «Agir Ensemble»

150, route de Ferney
Case postale 2100
1211 Gen ve 2
Suisse

Globales  kumenisches Aktionsb ndnis

150, route de Ferney
Postfach 2100
1211 Genf 2
Schweiz

☎ + 41 22 791 6723
✉ + 41 22 710 2387
✉ info@e-alliance.ch
www.e-alliance.ch



Selected Biblical texts for use in sermons and worship

Joshua 23:14

And now I am about to go the way of all the earth, and you know in your hearts and souls, all of you, that not one thing has failed of all the good things that the Lord your God promised concerning you; all have come to pass for you, not one of them has failed..

1 Kings 8:56

Blessed be the Lord, who has given rest to his people Israel according to all that he promised. Not one word has failed of all his good promise, which he spoke through his servant Moses.

Nehemiah 5:1-13

Now there was a great outcry of the people and of their wives against their Jewish kin. For there were those who said, "With our sons and our daughters, we are many; we must get grain, so that we may eat and stay alive." There were also those who said, "We are having to pledge our fields, our vineyards, and our houses in order to get grain during the famine." And there were those who said, "We are having to borrow money on our fields and vineyards to pay the king's tax. Now our flesh is the same as that of our kindred; our children are the same as their children; and yet we are forcing our sons and daughters to be slaves, and some of our daughters have been ravished; we are powerless and our fields and vineyards now belong to others."

I was very angry when I heard their outcry and these complaints. After thinking it over, I brought charges against the nobles and the officials; I said to them, "You are all taking interest from your own people." And I called a great assembly to deal with them, and said to them, "as far as we were able, we have brought back our Jewish kindred who have been sold to other nations; but now you are selling your own kin, who must then be bought back by us!" They were silent, and could not find a word to say. So I said, "The thing that you are doing is not good. Should you not walk in the fear of our God, to prevent the taunts of the nations our enemies: Moreover, I and my brothers and my servants are lending them money and grain. Let us stop this taking of interest. Restore to them, this very day, their fields, their vineyards, their olive orchards, and their houses, and the interest on money, grain, wine, and oil that you have been exacting from them." Then they said, "We will restore everything and demand nothing more from them. We will do as you say." And I called the priests, and made them take an oath to do as they had promised. I also shook out the fold of my garment and said, "So may God shake out everyone from house and from property who does not perform this promise. Thus may they be shaken out and emptied." And all the assembly said, "Amen," and praised the Lord. And the people did as they had promised.

Psalms 9:18

For the needy shall not always be forgotten, nor the hope of the poor perish forever.

Psalms 119: especially 49-50; 57-58; 113-116

Remember your word to your servant, in which you have made me hope. This is my comfort in my distress, that your promise gives me life.

The Lord is my portion; I promise to keep your words, I implore your favor with all my heart; be gracious to me according to your promise.

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HIV and AIDS Campaign: Keep the Promise

I hate the double-minded, but I love your law. You are my hiding place and my shield; I hope in your word. Go away from me, you evildoers, that I may keep the commandments of my God. Uphold me according to your promise, that I may live, and let me not be put to shame in my hope.

Jeremiah 32:36-42

Now therefore thus says the Lord, the God of Israel, concerning this city of which you say, "It is being given into the hand of the king of Babylon by the sword, by famine, and by pestilence": See I am going to gather them from all the lands to which I drove them in my anger and my wrath and in great indignation; I will bring them back to this place, and I will settle them in safety. They shall be my people, and I will be their God. I will give them one heart and one way, that they may fear me for all time, for their own good and the good of their children after them. I will make an everlasting covenant with them, never to draw back from doing good to them; and I will put the fear of me in their hearts, so that they may not turn from me. I will rejoice in doing good to them, and I will plant them in this land in faithfulness, with all my heart and all my soul.

Jeremiah 49:11

Leave your orphans, I will keep them alive;
and let your widows trust in me.

Luke 1:68-70

Blessed be the Lord the God of Israel
for he has looked favorably on his people and redeemed them.
He has raised up a mighty savior for us
in the house of his servant David,
As he spoke through the mouth of his holy prophets from of old.

2 Corinthians 1:20

For in him every one of God's promises is a "Yes." For this reason it is through him that we say "Amen," to the glory of God.

Hebrews 9-19

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Send in your suggested texts, sermons, worship outlines – especially on the theme "Keep the Promise" – for inclusion in the worship resources on the Ecumenical Advocacy Alliance's website.

The **Ecumenical Advocacy Alliance** is a broad international network of churches and Christian organizations cooperating in advocacy on global trade and HIV and AIDS. The Alliance is based in Geneva, Switzerland. For more information, see <http://www.e-alliance.ch/>