

HIV and AIDS Order of Worship from Norway to the FOCCISA-NORDIC project

“In him we live and move and have our being.” (Acts 17:28)

This worship service is the result of conversations we have had in Oslo concerning the stigmatization of persons who live with HIV, and to which we refer earlier in this book. This is not a linear order of worship / liturgy. During much of the service those who wish to do so may make their way to various stations in the sanctuary. It is intended that the entire *worship space* should be a sermon, and express both an image of God and a view of humanity. The various stations relate to human life and what happens at each of them happens within the sanctuary, i.e. in the presence of God who has created us, accepted us and set us free.

This worship service is quite out of the ordinary, so it is important that the worshippers be prepared in advance so they have some idea what they will be taking part in. This preparation may take place in prior worship services, church newsletters, etc. This is important so that people will not feel excluded or alienated. It is also important to set up an agenda for the worship service that explains the concept behind the service as well as its progression. The service has some similarities to the traditional Station of the Cross.

The stations mentioned here is our recommendation. They are made ready ahead of time. Since they require some space, you may add or reduce the number according to local preferences and space limitations. In most contexts, the number of stations listed here would not be feasible. We therefore recommend that you make a choice. But the station we have called the Place of Wonder should be included. It is best to find local expressions that can symbolize the various stations. We have made a few color suggestions that can be included by hanging pieces of fabric on the wall or laying them on the floor. It is also possible to let thin strips of fabric extend from the individual station to the Place of Wonder. There should be an open Bible at each of the stations, preferably open to one of the suggested Bible passages. In addition, the brief text could be written on a sheet of paper and hung up or placed next to the Bible. This will make it easier to see what the station symbolizes. We do not recommend “Post-it” notes. Most importantly, keep it simple and doable. What we have suggested here are possibilities, not necessities; local conditions and contexts should be taken into consideration and will determine to some extent what you decided to include.

We have also suggested where the various stations may be positioned in the sanctuary. These, too, are optional. Another possibility is to hold the entire service outdoors. The entrance to the “church” could be a sort of altar area. But it is not a good idea to have some stations indoors and some outdoors. This may easily be interpreted as some stations having more importance than others. A gymnasium or parish hall may also be used as a worship setting. Preparation for the service could be a good opportunity to hold a worship workshop involving both youth and adults. Time could be spent reflecting on the stations and arriving at which stations ought to be included, work out the unity of the service, design and make the stations, and perhaps find an alternative way in which to introduce them. You could, for example, attach personal experiences and stories to some of the stations. It is important that these be kept brief.

THE STATIONS

- Place for grievances/complaints. Bitterness. Stones. Dark and striking colors. Near the entrance to the sanctuary. Psalm 22:2
- Place for conversation. The possibility to unload burdens; confession. Placed in a rear corner of the sanctuary. Chairs placed in pairs. Tables with cups and warm tea.

Stones with burning candles on them. A deep, dark and restful green color. John 3: “Nicodemus came to Jesus by night and said ...”

- Place for fellowship. Placed in the opposite rear corner of the room. A burning candle in the center where people can sit in a circle around the light, preferably on pillows. I Corinthians 12:12-26 (v. 13); Philippians 2:1
- Place for joy and laughter. Along one of the outer walls. Yellow; the clown; or many colors, red noses or a picture of a clown. Genesis 18:12; I Corinthians 1:27a
- Place for the body, sexuality and sensuality. Massage (feet or hands). Warm, erotic colors and flowers, pink, veils preferably shaped as an abstract installation. Song of Solomon 4:1; Luke 7:38b
- Place of worth. Pearls, stars, blue. From Isaiah 45:3: “I will give you the treasures of darkness and hidden riches of secret places, that you may know that I, the Lord, who call you by your name.”
- Oasis. The source. At the baptismal font, with potted plants, a tree. A water faucet for watering the flowers; cold water to drink; a wash basin. Blue and green. John 4:14; Jesus’ baptism; Revelation 22 vs. 1 and 17; Psalm 42:1
- The place of vulnerability and pain. Center, toward the rear of the sanctuary. Blood red fabric. The possibility to share poetry and other texts. Jeremiah 30:17
- The Place for Wonder, the place of transformation, zest for life and strength. In the center of the sanctuary. Bread and wine. All the colors may come together here.
- The place of intercessory prayer and lighting of candles. On the way up to the altar area. The opportunity to light candles and to write intercessory prayers on slips of paper. A crock in which to place the slips of paper. Color of hope. Philippians 4:6
- The place of rest. In front of the altar. Warm and dark colors, pillows, blankets, mattresses. Matthew 11:28
- The place of struggle. Behind the altar, preferably along the wall toward the pulpit. Posters/sheets of paper on the wall on which to write. Battle colors. Purple. Ephesians 6:12

THE LITURGY:

- PROCESSION. With wine and bread (a loaf of bread), water for the oasis and a candle for each station. One person to each candle, carried in cupped hands. The procession moves toward the altar.
- SALUTATION and SHORT BIBLE TEXT: Acts 17:24-25; 27b-28
The persons with candles go either to their respective stations following the salutation or during the Introduction as each of the stations is mentioned. In the latter case, the closest stations should be mentioned first so that the congregation can see that that is where the candle bearers go, and then mention the stations moving toward the rear of the sanctuary.
- SONG
- INTRODUCTION. Opening and definition of the room. Create a sense of security in relation to what will happen.
 - o HIV. The right to be whole.
 - o “Behold the man!” Give space for all of life supported by God.
 - o All the stations are mentioned, either with someone relating a personal experience that connects them to a specific station, or by taking some ideas from the sermon listed at the end of this suggested order of worship.
If the candle bearers have gone to their stations, they stand up as their station is mentioned and hold up the candle.

- People may quietly remain seated in their places, or go to the station they wish. There is no point in going to as many stations as possible. Listen to your feelings.
- Announce whether there will be Holy Communion or an Agape meal or perhaps something else following the visits to the stations.
- Everything IS DONE in God's sight, in God's sanctuary, and points to God who accepts and has created us as we are.
- Prayer concluding the introduction: "Thank you, God, that we can be whole persons in your house—you, our creator, Jesus who has affirmed us and set us free, the Holy Spirit, the giver and renewer of life within us."
- (Preferably the Nicene CONFESSIO OF FAITH)
- MUSIC. Instrumental music or a Taizé song (suggestion: Ubi caritas, Confitemini)
- VISIT TO THE STATIONS. A half-hour minimum; either with quiet, meditative background music, or in silence if that is not too threatening. If silence is chosen, it may be good to break the silence two or three times with a Taizé song or something similar. This creates a feeling of fellowship in the room even as people visit the various stations.
- HOLY COMMUNION or an AGAPÉ MEAL. While people are still dispersed in the room, the service continues. People may remain where they are.
 - When there is Holy Communion: the celebrant kneels next to the bread and wine in the center aisle and may begin directly with the Words of Institution: "In the night when he was betrayed..."
 - Exchange of the sign of Peace: "Let us greet one another with the peace of Christ / 'The peace of the Lord be with you.'"
 - The distribution takes place from the Place of Wonder. Those who wish may receive Communion. Bread that has been blessed (not consecrated) may be distributed to those who do not wish Communion. The distribution may take place in silence or accompanied with Taizé songs (Eat this bread).
- THE LORD'S PRAYER, BENEDICTION AND DISMISSAL. Everyone gathers in a circle, or in circles within circles. The Lord's Prayer is prayed in unison, a pastor pronounces the benediction.
- RECESSIONAL SONG. HAMBANATHI from South Africa, for example.

Example of a short introduction for use at the various stations:

We are here. We have come to stand in the presence of Holiness. We have turned our backs on the world. The fragile, difficult, hard, unjust, sumptuous and wonderful world. We stand here, looking neat on the outside. But "the world" has not turned its back on us. We are still carrying it with us inside. Frustrations and anger stir beneath the surface. Longings and failures compete with each other to take attention away from our meeting with Holiness. Perhaps the physical body still remembers the experiences of the night even though the spirit tries to forget them, pride over yesterday's good deeds threatens humility or shame over who we are threatens our self-worth.

We try to be perfect and believe that it is synonymous with being whole—and whole is what we must be when we are going to meet God ... Or is that the way it should

be? Isn't being whole to accept all the diversity of good and evil? Isn't it to give oneself the right to be a part of creation, but also to be part of a struggling world?

It is when we accept this and take with us into church all that we are as human beings, that the meeting with Holiness takes place. Then we make room for grace, restoration and joy.

Everything happens—*In God*

In this service we are going to be permitted to be what we are, namely, human beings. Within each of us there are many rooms, and today there are also many “rooms” in this house of God. Some days it is the rooms with joy and thankfulness that dominate our space. If that is the case for you today, then follow the candle bearer to the place for *joy and laughter*. If, on the other hand, this is a day when the room with shame and anger dominates, then follow a different candle bearer to the place for *grievances/complaints*. If your body switches between the longing for being touched and wanting to rest, then visit both the place for *the body, sexuality and sensuality* – and the place of *rest*. Or if you are at a place in life where everything feels dried up or like wandering in a barren landscape, then follow the candle bearer to the *spring with living water* or take a trip to the place of *worth* where you again can rise up in all your greatness. Or a possible way may take you from the place of *conversation*, where you can unload yourself of whatever it is that hinders you from having contact with others, to the place of *fellowship* where you receive new courage from others. From there you go further either for others at the place of *intercessory prayer and lighting of candles*, or hurl yourself into the fight for the good life at the place of *struggle*.

Finally, take the road leading from all the stations to the *PLACE OF WONDER*, where we raise our hands like empty receptacles and receive bread and wine, the courage to live and strength to go out into the world, but with God.

Here we are safe. In God's house, face to face with Holiness, we can be who we are.

Everything happens—*IN GOD*.

Sit quietly for a while and feel what you need today. Perhaps it is enough to visit one station—or maybe you just want to sit in the church pew? Whatever is right for you is right.

In God's house we are free.

In God we live and move and have our being.

Suggested songs:

From Taizé:

- Bless the Lord my soul
- Ubi Caritas
- Confitemini
- Eat this bread / Kom til ham, livets brød
- La ténèbre / Our darkness is never darkness / Nattens mørke

- Mon âme se repose / In God alone my soul / Min sjel får hvile ut
- Jésus le Christ / Lord Jesus Christ, your light shines within us / Jesus Gud Son
- The Kingdom of God / Guds rike
- Dona la pace Signore / Gi oss din fred