#### World AIDS Day Worship Resource

#### Toward Three Zeros in Faith, Commitment, and Love

#### Background

This service is an adaptation of the Ecumenical Advocacy Alliance World AIDS Day worship liturgy that can be downloaded from [www.e-alliance.ch/en/s/hivaids/world-aids-day](http://www.e-alliance.ch/en/s/hivaids/world-aids-day). The original service is also available in French, Spanish, and German, along with other resources for World AIDS Day. Please feel free to adapt the following service to your own local context. Remember to have coloured strips of paper available if you choose to include the “Reflecting Together” section.

### Call to Worship

Leader: We gather before our God of promises with faith, commitment, and hope. Hear the promise of the one seated on the throne:

**All: See, I am making all things new.**

Leader: Hear the promise of the resurrected one:

**All: I am with you always, to the end of the age.**

Leader: Hear the promise borne on the wind:

**All: The Spirit bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God; and if children, then heirs, heirs of God and joint heirs with Christ.**

Leader: We come to worship a faithful God, who keeps these promises of love. In the name of the Blessed Trinity, one God, now and forever. Amen.

### Opening Hymn

“Cantai ao Senhor/Oh Sing to the Lord” (*The International Ecumenical Hymnbook*, Thuma Mina #3)

“Come, Let Us Sing” (*Voices United* 222)

“Joyful, Joyful We Adore You” (*Voices United* 232)

“When Hands Reach Out Beyond Divides” (*More Voices* 169)

### Lighting of Advent Wreath

The following liturgy is an adaption from the M&S Advent wreath lighting liturgy found at [www.united-church.ca/planning/seasons/advent](http://www.united-church.ca/planning/seasons/advent). *Voice 2* is in italic font as in the original service it was suggested that at least a week before the first Sunday of Advent, members of the Sunday school or congregation could be provided with cameras and asked to take photos of places in their community in need of hope and places where they see hope. This is repeated for each week of Advent with the request that photos reflect the themes of peace, joy, and love respectively. These photos can be used as slides when *voice two* (indicated by *italic font*) speaks in the liturgy.

Voice 1: A candle of hope burns…

*Voice 2: through longing, doubt, and despair,*

*through earthquakes, famine, and drought.*

**All: Through it all,**

**God is with us;**

**there is always a spark of hope.**

Voice 1: Hope burns…

*Voice 2: in* (*name local situations and places where hope is being shared through actions*)*;*

Voice 1: in the work of the Ecumenical Advocacy Alliance and all those who work and fight for AIDS prevention and treatment.

**All: In every place,**

**God calls us,**

**to share and reflect the Lights of Lights**

*Voice 2: that is and is to come;*

Voice 1: our hope in a despairing world.

(*The first candle is lit.*)

### Song

“Hope Shines as the Solitary Star” (*More Voices* 220)

### Children’s Time

Some signs are easier to read then others. Prepare a variety of symbols and images that represent signs of faith, commitment, and love around the world. For instance, a cross or fish symbol may represent a person’s faith in Jesus and Jesus’ promises to us. A red ribbon may represent a person’s commitment to AIDS research, treatment, and prevention. A plate of cookies (preferably warm) may remind us of a person’s love or caring for us. Some signs make us feel good, like signs of faith, commitment, and love, and some signs may make us feel sad, like signs of sorrow, destruction, and pain. (You may also prepare some signs of sorrow in your community or ask the children to name some.)

Today, lots of people will be wearing these red ribbons as a sign of their commitment to AIDS prevention and their hope for a day when there is “Zero AIDS-related deaths, Zero new HIV infections, and Zero discrimination/bullying).” Today, we are urged to look for some of the positive signs of hope that we see in the fight against AIDS (for example, less people are being infected, fewer babies are born with HIV, and more people have access to needed medication). And to pay attention to the signs telling us that there is still work to be done in the fight against AIDS (there are still more people newly infected than there are being treated; there are still people infected who are not receiving treatment including two million children; and people living with AIDS are still bullied).

In today’s scripture reading Jesus urges us to pay attention to all of the signs around us (Luke 21:29–30), both good and bad. It is easy to focus on the good signs, because they remind us of all the ways that we experience God. But we also need to look for the signs of pain and suffering, because they remind us of all the places where God would have us work.

As we wait for Jesus’ coming, how can we become more aware of the signs of destruction and the signs of hope around us?

### Children’s Hymn

“People, Look East” (*Voices United* 9)

“Christ Has No Body Now but Yours” (*More Voices* 171)

### Scripture

Jeremiah 33:14–16; 1 Thessalonians 3:9–13; Psalm 25:1–10 (*Voices United* 752); Luke 21:25–36

### Video Reflection

The video is available online at <http://iac.ecumenicaladvocacy.org/in-the-rush-for-a-cure-lessons-we-cannot-forget>, or can be downloaded as a standalone file from www.e-alliance.ch/en/s/hivaids/world-aids-day.

If you are unable to show a video in your place of worship, you could invite different voices to read some of the main points made by people in the video that have been transcribed below.

### Video Transcription

**Peter Prove, Executive Director, Ecumenical Advocacy Alliance:** There is a lot of excitement here at the International AIDS Conference 2012 about new science and new developments that might hold out promise for a vaccine or a cure. But, as much as we must celebrate and pursue these opportunities, we must not lose sight of the “software” of the HIV response—the crucial enablers, the community based programming—that enables communities to engage in the response and deal with issues like stigma and discrimination that are obstacles to any delivery of that sort of scientific advance. We will not win this struggle against HIV with pharmaceuticals alone. It has to be dealt with at the community level, at the level of attitudes, and at the level of empowerment of those communities most affected. And in that regard the faith-based community has a key responsibility and a key potential.

**The Rev. Michael Schuenemeyer, Executive Director, United Church of Christ HIV and AIDS Network:** One of the things that the faith community has learned is that we work better when we work together; that the networking of relationships across all sectors of the response is really critical to being effective in responding to this disease.

**Erlinda Senturias, Former Consultant, Christian Conference of Asia:** If we want to turn the tide, everybody must be invited to the table, everyone must be included. We cannot exclude anyone.

**Faghmeda Miller, Positive Muslims, South Africa:** Although some of us are working together, not all of us are working together. This is the biggest problem. Some communities still have this notion that “It’s not affecting us.” It’s always “out there.” It’s “in your religion, not in my religion.” We really must work hard to change this and work together 100 percent.

**Canon Gideon Byamugisha, Goodwill Ambassador on HIV & AIDS, Christian Aid UK:** Communities still need to learn that having the right language is the first step. This means having the right language to reduce stigma and shame, to multiply safe practices and access to testing, treatment, and empowerment.

**Pernessa Seele, CEO and Founder, The Balm in Gilead:** Today, the AIDS epidemic is teaching us about the commonalities between the African Americans and Africans. Today in Raleigh Durham, North Carolina, the rate of HIV among Black women is higher than the rate of HIV among women in the Republic of the Congo. So, we are learning about the commonalities among Black women, men who have sex with men—and the phobias around that—and youth. We have so many commonalities. One commonality that is central is the role of faith. For Black people worldwide, faith is central to how they address everything in their lives.

**Asavari Herwadkar, Coordinator for the Asian Interfaith Network on HIV/AIDS (AINA) and the International Network of Religious Leaders living with or Personally Affected by HIV and AIDS (INERELA+) in Asia Pacific:** Communities have realised that they have to help much more that they have been up to now; that when it comes to health issues that include elements of stigma and discrimination it cannot be left solely to a few people, to the health professionals or politicians. The impact that they could have as faith communities means that they have to play a bigger role if we really want to properly address these issues.

**The Rev. Michael Schuenemeyer, Executive Director, United Church of Christ HIV and AIDS Network:** So often we are quick to jump to judgmental positions about how HIV is transmitted, and we forget that we really need to ground ourselves in the value that as a child of God every person is endowed with worth and dignity that human judgment cannot set aside. And we always need to be engaging in our response to HIV or any other issue from the values of worth and dignity.

### Litany for Change

**All: What will it take, O God…**

Left: for us to see a day of no more AIDS-related deaths, no more new HIV infections, and no more discrimination in the land of the living?

**All: What will it take, O God…**

Right: for change to come in our community, in our lives?

**All: What will it take, O God…**

Left: for the scattered to be gathered that all may praise and dance together?

**All: What will it take, O God…**

Right: for us to see the end of AIDS?

**All: What will it take, O God…**

Left: for us, your church, to be free from ignorance and fear?

**All: What will it take, O God…**

Right: for us to recognize your Word become flesh and living among us with HIV?

**All: What will it take, O God, for the dance to begin and the deaths to end?**

### Reflecting Together

Invite congregants to consider the questions in the above liturgy and to write any words, phrases of promise, or responses that come to mind on coloured strips of paper.

### Invitation to Offering

During the offertory hymn ask congregants to bring forward and offer their financial gifts as well as their reflection/prayer in the appropriate basket. Please let congregants know that their prayers will be shared in community.

### Offertory Hymn

“O Ancient Love” (*Voices United* 17)

“When Hands Reach Out and Fingers Trace” (*More Voices* 136)

### Offertory Prayer

God of hope, unity, and promise,

God of peace,

God of love,

accept these gifts that we now give back to you.

May we be faithful stewards of the gifts you have entrusted to us.

Amen.

### Pastoral Prayers

God of hope,

all of us are affected by HIV and AIDS.

At this time of Advent hope,

as we prepare for the coming of your Son into this world,

we give thanks for signs of hope:

for growing understanding,

for medical advances,

for changing attitudes and behaviour,

for greater awareness and concern in your church.

**All: Lord hear us, Lord graciously hear us.**

**or: “Lord, Listen to Your Children Praying” (*Voices United* 400)**

God of unity,

bind us together with strong ties of love,

that all churches will be places where everyone can find acceptance.

May our churches provide a welcome for all affected by HIV and AIDS.

May they be places where care is given and received,

especially for affected children and youth;

where stories are told and heard;

where fear is overcome by love;

where you are to be found.

**All: Lord hear us, Lord graciously hear us.**

**or “Lord, Listen to Your Children Praying” (*Voices United* 400)**

God of promise,

the end of AIDS is in sight!

Give us courage to run the race set before us.

We look to you in prayer and in action

for a day when all will have access to education and information;

for a day when all who need it can get affordable and good quality treatment;

for a day when all are accepted, included, and given care and support.

Let us shed our cynicism, denial, selfishness, and laziness.

May we surprise you, as you surprise us!

**All: Lord hear us, Lord graciously hear us.**

**or “Lord, Listen to Your Children Praying” (*Voices United* 400)**

### Prayer of Jesus

### Declaration of Commitment

Leader: Church, we are the Body of Christ,

**All: the Body of Christ, living with HIV.**

Leader: If we choose, we can make a difference.

**All: If we choose, we can help bring newness, hope, and peace,**

Leader: in our homes, in our church, in our community, in our nation, in our world;

**All: in our bodies, in our minds, in our spirits.**

Leader: Our sisters and brothers, our parents and children are infected with HIV.

**All: We are living and dying with AIDS.**

Leader: If we choose, the blockages to healing can be removed.

**All: We choose compassion. We choose to respond.**

Leader: Will you respond with your money, with your time, with your love?

**All: We are the Body of Christ.**

**We choose to respond until the day of**

**the last new HIV infection and**

**the last child born with HIV;**

**the last time that someone is stigmatized or bullied because of HIV and AIDS;**

**and the day of the last time that someone dies from this disease.**

**We pray and act for the day of the last one!**

### Closing Hymn

“There’s a Voice in the Wilderness” (*Voices United* 18)

“Go, Make a Diff’rence” (*More Voices* 209)

“Sent Out in Jesus’ Name” (*More Voices* 212)

During the closing hymn have the ushers hand out the rainbow prayers/reflections. Invite everyone to hold somebody else’s prayer as a symbolic gesture of our oneness in Christ.

### Sending Forth

(*All congregants stand and hold aloft the strips of paper they have just received.*)

Leader: In Genesis 9, God said to Noah,[\*](javascript:void(0);)”11I establish my covenant with you, that never again shall all flesh be cut off by the waters of a flood, and never again shall there be a flood to destroy the earth” (verse 11). “13I have set my bow in the clouds, and it shall be a sign of the covenant between me and the earth. 14When I bring clouds over the earth and the bow is seen in the clouds, 15I will remember my covenant that is between me and you and every living creature of all flesh; and the waters shall never again become a flood to destroy all flesh. 16When the bow is in the clouds, I will see it and remember the everlasting covenant between God and every living creature of all flesh that is on the earth” (verses 13–16).

**All: We claim the promise of our God for all, in our hearts, minds, and actions.**

Leader: Then go forth, confident in the trustworthiness of the One who placed the rainbow in the heavens—that we may see, remember, and do.

**All: We claim the promise of our God for all, in our hearts, minds, and actions.**

Leader: Go forth, strengthened by hope from the One who sent Jesus the Christ, knowing that this hope will not disappoint us.

**All: We claim the promise of our God for all, in our hearts, minds, and actions.**

Leader: Go forth by faith. The One who placed the rainbow and sent the

Christ has sent the Spirit, so we know that God is with us always.

### Amen

“Asithi/Sing Amen” (*Voices United* 431)

“Amen” (“Danish”) (*Voices United* 967)

“Amen, Amen, It Shall Be So” (*More Voices* 112)

“Great Amen” (KINGSFOLD) (*More Voices* 205)

Credits: Prayers and sermon notes for this service were written and compiled by Ruth Foley for the Ecumenical Advocacy Alliance, with input from Andrew Donaldson, Karen Plater, and Sara Speicher, unless otherwise indicated. With permission this service has been adapted for use in The United Church of Canada.

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The Call to Worship is based on a prayer developed for the Interfaith Pre-Conference to AIDS 2006 by the Ecumenical Advocacy Alliance.

The texts for the Congregational Response, the Declaration of Commitment, and the Sending Forth are all adapted from resources produced by The Balm in Gilead for the National Week of Prayer for the Healing of AIDS: <http://www.nationalweekofprayerforthehealingofaids.org/downloads/2012%20NWPHA%20E-Worship%20Book%20Final-fnl.pdf>.

The final response in the Declaration of Commitment draws from the Prayer of Commitment written for an Interfaith Service of Hope and Commitment held at the time of the NAMES Project AIDS Quilt Memorial display in Washington National Cathedral in July 2012.

The intercessions are adapted from prayers prepared by The Diakonia Council of Churches in South Africa.