

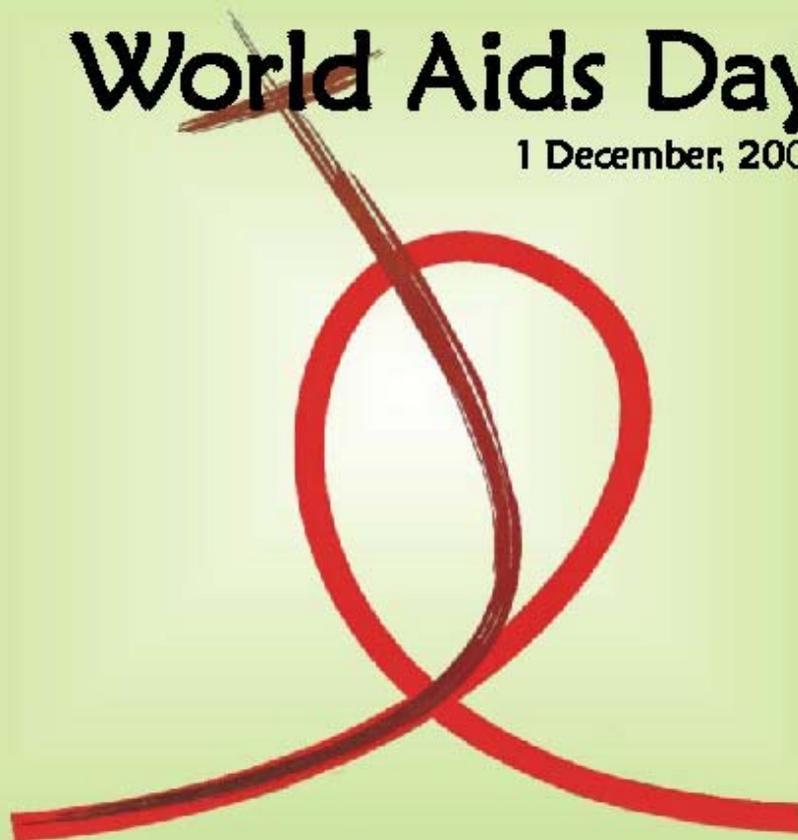


Christian Conference of Asia

Take  
the Lead   
Stop AIDS. Keep the Promise.

# World Aids Day

1 December, 2007



*A Liturgy to be used in places of  
worship around the world*



### *Worship Service for World AIDS Day 2007*

1<sup>st</sup> December is a day to remember those infected with HIV and AIDS. AIDS Sunday (2<sup>nd</sup> December) also signifies the onset of 'Advent', the days leading up to the birth-event of our Lord Jesus Christ. A poignant question can be asked at this time, would Joseph and Mary be given even a manger to stay, if it was felt that they were HIV Positive? And would the Wise Men have laid gifts at baby Jesus feet, if they knew he was a child of Positive parents? These are theoretical questions no doubt, but history might have been rewritten if AIDS was as common then as it is now.

Although almost everyone is aware of AIDS and its ramifications, many are not conscious of the immense personal suffering that HIV Positive people go through in their everyday life.

“I know that with antiretroviral medicines, a good diet and a healthy and risk-free lifestyle, I can live for another 20-30 years. But the way my family is treating me, I have no desire to live another day.” We need to examine the reasons behind the mournful cry of this young HIV-positive mother. The real killer is not the virus, or any of the opportunistic diseases that come in its wake, but the highly negative response of the society that we all live in.

Churches, through their leaders, institutions and laity need to change their attitudes towards PLWA's (People Living With Aids), their families, and caregivers. The general idea of AIDS as a highly contagious 'killer' disease has also led to widespread stigma. And stigma, acted upon is nothing but discrimination. Discrimination in accessing housing, medical care and even familial relationships is a common experience they face. And yet discrimination is against everything taught in our Gospels and exemplified by Jesus Christ.

This year's worship service has been compiled by CCA's partner, the EAA (Evangelical Advocacy Alliance), and highlights 'Leadership' as its theme. In the response to AIDS, it is crucial that people in the church choose to accept leadership, where there is none and support people already leading in the HIV response, whether nationally, locally or in the churches themselves.

The Christian Conference of Asia sends this out as a prayer to churches of Asia, so that they can use it to further their spiritual response to HIV and AIDS.

**Fr. Philip Kuruvilla**  
**Consultant CCA-HIV/AIDS Program**  
**Christian Conference of Asia**

## **Preparation**

The following suggestions will help in the planning of the worship and in the preparation of materials needed for it.

This worship service works best if people are seated in a circle. However, it can be adapted for spaces with fixed pews.

The following symbols are used in the service:

- In the center of the circle (or prominent at the front of the church) is a **large red ribbon**, symbol of HIV and AIDS. It may be easiest to create this from a long piece of red fabric.
- A **large candle** is placed in the middle or in front of the ribbon. It will be lit during the service to represent the igniting of new passion in responding to HIV and AIDS. It can also be the candle traditionally lit for the first Sunday in Advent.
- The prayers of intercession should be read by 6 different readers, each one symbolizing a different type of leadership, for example: government, business, labor, organizations/institutions, churches, men, women, children, or youth. **Different colored ribbons or cloths** worn by the readers will be needed to symbolize different types and styles of leadership. These ribbons or cloths might be worn by the 6 readers from the start of the service.
- **Little candles** decorated with small red ribbons will be distributed to the congregation and lit as the sign of commitment.

*Worship Service for World AIDS Day 2007*



*Gathering*

The congregation gathers outside the place for worship if this is appropriate in the local context. The people are welcomed and given a brief introduction about the theme of the celebration: **Take the Lead. Stop AIDS. Keep the Promise.**

*Invitation to the worship*

**Reader 1:** Come, let us go up to meet the God of life,  
**Reader 2:** to the fountain of all hope,  
**Reader 3:** that God may teach us God's ways,  
**Reader 4:** and that we may walk on God's pathways guided by God's light.  
*(adapted from Isaiah 2:3-5)*

*Hymn 1*

*The congregation moves into the worship space while singing a familiar hymn.*

*Entrance antiphon*

**Leader:** Come Lord, share this time with us  
just as you share our lives every day,  
with light and shadow,  
with music and joyful songs filling the air  
and with, at other times, the sad wail of the soul  
suffering without hope.

**People:** **Come, Lord, share this time with us  
just as one day you shared the dusty paths of life  
with men, children and women,  
preaching, healing, suffering, dying, loving,  
raised up to keep alive hope in your new reign  
we keep seeking.**

**Leader:** Come, Lord, share this time with us  
just as you shared words, gestures, hugs  
and a real loaf of bread broken in pieces,  
a sign of your complete commitment  
to a world hungry for peace, justice and life.

**People:** **Come, Lord, share this time with us.**

**Mark us with the fire of your presence  
transforming and renewing our lives.**

**All: Come, Lord, share this time with us.  
Strengthen us as leaders and inspire us  
to keep the promise to stop the spread of HIV and AIDS.**

*Call to Confession*

**Leader:** Take a moment to look at the red ribbon. People are living with HIV. People are struggling and people are dying. Who do you see there? Who do you see there that you wish you didn't see?

We live in a world which does not want to see and sometimes we must confess we do not want to see either. So in silence, one by one, you are invited to turn your back on the ribbon.

*(If the leader is part of the circle the leader should begin this gesture and indicate the direction of the action. In other settings the leader should indicate where the action should begin and how it moves throughout the congregation.)*

*Silence*

**Leader:** "God, I ask only:  
that I don't become indifferent to pain,  
that I don't become indifferent to injustice,  
that I don't become indifferent to the future."

*Silence*

*Litany of Confession*

*Where printing is not available or a projector is being used the response of the people is simply "Forgive us and show us new pathways"*

**Reader 1:** We confess to you, God, the indifference,  
which in the guise of ignorance  
diverts our eyes  
from people living with HIV and their loved ones.

**People:** **Forgive us and show us new pathways where information and knowledge transform us.**

**Reader 2:** We confess to you, God, the indifference,  
barricaded by prejudice,  
which deafens our ears  
to the cry  
of people living with HIV and their loved ones.

**People:** **Forgive us and show us new pathways of care and support.**

**Reader 3:** We confess to you, God, the indifference,  
blanketed by fear,  
which immobilizes our hands  
from the needs  
of people living with HIV and their loved ones.

**People:** **Forgive us and show us new pathways of love and tender, affirming touch.**

**Reader 4:** We confess to you, God, the indifference,  
shielded by rejection,  
which closes our hearts  
to the separation and powerlessness  
of people living with HIV and their loved ones.

**People:** **Forgive us and show us new pathways of accompaniment and acceptance by communities who take the lead.**

**Reader 5:** We confess to you, God, our indifference,  
wrapped in isolation,  
which causes us to abandon  
people living with HIV and their loved ones.

**People:** **Forgive us and show us new pathways of commitment and leadership.**

*Silence*

*Hymn 2*      *a familiar hymn to be sung here.*

**Leader:** As we sing, you are invited to turn around to face the red ribbon again.

*At the end of the hymn the Leader invites people to be seated. The Leader who says the words of forgiveness lights the candle in the middle of the red ribbon.*

*Words of Forgiveness*

**Leader:** God keeps God's promise of forgiveness  
to all who draw near  
recognizing their sin.  
With an open, loving heart,  
God acknowledges our fidelity  
even in the little we have done,  
and gives us new opportunities  
to be good and faithful servants  
in the much that still needs to be done. Amen

*The Leader then shows the large candle to all the people in a slow gesture.  
The Leader says "Take the Lead."*

*Hymn 3*            *a familiar hymn to be sung here.*

*Reading from the New Testament*

**Romans 13:11-14** (NRSV)

*The Leader takes the large candle and gives it to the Epistle reader with the words: "Take the Lead". The Epistle reader takes the candle and the Leader opens the Bible and holds it for the reader. The reader must be careful not to blow out the candle while saying the words. If possible this would be best done inside or near the AIDS ribbon.*

"Besides this, you know what time it is, how it is now the moment for you to wake from sleep.

*The reader pauses.*

For salvation is nearer to us now than when we became believers; the night is far gone, the day is near.

*The reader pauses.*

Let us then lay aside the works of darkness and put on the armor of light;

*The reader stops and lights one of the small candles.*

let us live honourably as in the day, not in reveling and drunkenness, not in debauchery and licentiousness, not in quarrelling and jealousy. Instead, put on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make no provision for the flesh to gratify its desires."

*The reader lights one of the small candles.*

*The Leader closes the Bible and takes the large candle and puts it in its place.*

*Hallelujah (sung)*

*Gospel Reading*

**Matthew 24:36-44** (NRSV)

*The Leader takes the large candle and gives it to the Gospel reader with the words: "Take the Lead." If possible the reader does the reading while walking around the shape of the ribbon. This would be most effective if the reading was memorized and the reader lifted the large candle and carried it.*

"But about that day and hour no one knows, neither the angels of heaven, nor the Son, but only the Father. For as the days of Noah were, so will be the coming of the Son of Man. For as in those days before the flood they were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, until the day Noah entered the ark, and they knew nothing until the flood came and swept them all away,

*The reader stops at this point as if to reflect on all those who have been swept away.*

so too will be the coming of the Son of Man. Then two will be in the field; one will be taken

*Again the reader stops to remember the one taken.*

and one will be left. Two women will be grinding meal together; one will be taken

*The reader stops to remember the one taken.*

and one will be left.

Keep awake therefore,

*The reader pauses.*

for you do not know on what day your Lord is coming. But understand this: if the owner of the house had known in what part of the night the thief was coming, he would have stayed awake and would not have let his house be broken in to. Therefore you must also be ready,

*The reader lights one of the small candles.*

for the Son of Man is coming at an unexpected hour.”

*The reader now gives the candle to the Leader. The Leader takes it to the person who will give the sermon and gives it to him or her with the words: “Take the Lead”. The person can either keep the candle while preaching, or if this is not practicable put it back in the center of the ribbon.*

*Sermon*

*Hymn 4 a hymn to be sung here.*

*Affirmation of Faith*

**People: We believe in the God of Life  
who makes men and women in God’s image and likeness.  
Created equal, all people deserve a full life with dignity  
regardless of age, sex, race, religion, sexual orientation or  
nationality.  
God guides us towards fountains where our lives can be renewed  
and made abundant.**

**We believe in Jesus Christ, God’s son,  
who walks by our side.  
Because Jesus shows us his great love and embraces us with it,  
we have the example  
to follow in love,  
embracing and supporting people living with HIV.**

We believe in the Holy Spirit who encourages and comforts us.  
One fruit of the Spirit is a motivated and animated community of faith  
touched by its fire, power and love.

We believe that the Church, in all its different expressions, must every day practice justice and compassion for all our sisters and brothers who are sick, poor, hungry, imprisoned or a stranger in a place not their own.

We believe that the Church, with its many gifts,  
has been called to make an impact on situations of oppression that continue in this world  
by standing together, struggling together,  
and offering comfort and accompaniment at the time they are most needed.

We believe that the Church, in its many expressions involving children, youth and adults, needs to play a stronger role in providing leadership in the response to HIV and AIDS.

#### *Our Promises*

**People:** Because of what we believe,  
we commit ourselves to be part of the global response to HIV and AIDS,  
keeping our promise to stop the hurt it causes,  
recognizing our fragility and vulnerability,  
but also knowing that we are instruments of light  
that comes from the One who came to give life, life in its fullness.

We commit ourselves to promote the development of sensitive, shared, informed and generous leadership,  
capable of influencing faith communities and social politics in our country and beyond our borders.

We commit ourselves to open ourselves and our church,  
to provide welcoming places where people living with HIV and their loved ones,  
can find love, acceptance, understanding, a listening ear, support and growth.

We commit ourselves, from this moment forward, until God's reign of health and life comes in its fullness. Amen.

#### *Symbol of commitment*

**Leader:** You are invited to come and light a small candle. Then you give it to the person in front of you with the words: "Take the Lead." The next person will light a candle and give it to you. As there is space you may

remain around the ribbon for a moment before returning to your seat being careful as you move with a lit candle.

*Psalm 121*

**Person** (*read in a dramatic anguished voice*):

I lift up my eyes to the hills! Where will my help come from?  
My help comes from the creator, who gives me health.

*(The next three leaders read with a tone of comfort)*

**Reader 1:** God will not let your foot slip; God will never become drowsy or sleepy.  
The One watching over you will not slumber.

**Reader 2:** The Lord will keep you; the Lord is your shade,  
The sun will not harm you by day nor the moon by night.

**Reader 3:** The Lord will keep you from all evil;  
the Lord will watch over your coming and going and will protect you now  
and forevermore.

*Hymn 5* a familiar hymn to be sung here.

*During the hymn the people who will lead the prayers of thanksgiving come forward each with their different colored piece of fabric.*

*Prayer*

**Reader 1:** Thank you God,  
for international organizations that have committed themselves to  
respond to HIV and AIDS. Strengthen their leaders and renew their  
conviction to Stop AIDS. May they keep the promise.

*This person takes the cloth from around them and holds it up.*

**Reader 2:** Thank you God,  
for government organizations and diverse networks of civil society that  
work to defend the human rights of people living with HIV. We pray for  
all who have the political power to make decisions. May your justice  
work in them so they recognize the full humanity of people living with  
HIV and gain a renewed sensitivity to their needs.

*This person takes the cloth from around them and ties it to the cloth of the preceding person.*

**Reader 3:** Thank you God,  
for different churches that have taken up their commitment to  
accompany, strengthen and encourage people living with HIV. Support  
them and inspire their creativity as they seek new methods and strategies  
to face this task.

*This person takes the cloth from around them and ties it to the cloth of the preceding person.*

**Reader 4:** Thank you God,

for this time of Advent, when we remember the incarnation of your Son, Jesus Christ. As we think of the coming of the child Jesus, we pray for babies, boys and girls who are living with HIV. We remember the millions of children orphaned by AIDS, who are too often left to look after their own brothers and sisters, their own education, and their own homes.

*This person takes the cloth from around them and ties it to the cloth of the preceding person.*

**Reader 5:** Thank you God,  
for those who lead with soothing hands, kind voices and encouraging smiles, who day by day offer their care to people living with HIV and dying of AIDS related illness.

*This person takes the cloth from around them and ties it to the cloth of the preceding person.*

**Reader 6:** Thank you God,  
for all of our brothers and sisters living with HIV. They are a precious gift to us and their dignity is given by you – not to be taken away by anyone. We pray that you strengthen their spirits and give them hope in the full life that you offer.

**People:** Amen.

*This person takes the cloth from around them and ties it to the cloth of the preceding person and then joins the end with the cloth of the first reader tying them together to make a circle around the red ribbon and candle in the centre.*

*The circle of cloth is now completed and the readers hold it high, and if possible move in a circular motion around the AIDS ribbon. They hold it up during the prayer to follow.*

*Community Prayer*

**People:** Lord, you have no other body than ours,  
You have no other hands than ours,  
Your only feet belong to us  
And ours are the eyes that with your compassion look at the world.  
Ours are the feet with which you walk around doing good  
Ours are the hands with which we now bless.  
Lord, here are our bodies, our whole lives. We want to be leaders  
whose bodies are extensions of yours, so that the promise of  
abundant life is a reality for our brothers and sisters who live with  
or are affected by HIV and AIDS. Amen.

*They place the circle of cloth around the AIDS ribbon.*

*Sending Out*

*The Leader takes the candle and lifts it*

**Leader:** God of life and health,

in Jesus Christ, you have drawn close to us.  
During this time of expectant waiting  
inspire within our hearts a militant hope  
so we can walk along side people who live with HIV  
and make visible the values of your kingdom,  
the kingdom of your beloved son, our savior and brother.

**People:** **Amen.**

*Benediction*

*Hymn 6* a hymn to be sung here.

*End of Service*

*Credits*

*Cover design by*

Ms Sagarika Chetty, Executive Secretary of NCC India

*This liturgy was written by:*

Rev. Elizabeth Hernandez Carillo, Liturgist and coordinator of the writing of this liturgy

Laura Figueroa Granados, Theologian

Guillermina Plascencia Favila, Social worker and Advisor to the Semilla de Esperanza, a project that works with boys and girls who live with HIV

Psalm 121 is adapted from the Latin American Bible, Published by Alba House, June 1984.

Community Prayer adapted from a prayer attributed to Saint Theresa of Avila.

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**Appendix:**

## **STATEMENT**

International Interfaith Pre-Conference on HIV/AIDS

“Response of Faith Communities to HIV and AIDS-

Have We Kept the Promise”

17-19 August 2007, Colombo Sri Lanka

Representing the major religions of Asia, we were participants at the International Interfaith Pre-ICAAP Conference, organized by Asian Interfaith Network on AIDS (AINA), Christian Conference of Asia and the World Council of Churches on the theme “Response of Faith Communities to HIV and AIDS -Have We Kept the Promise?”

Having deliberated for three days on the role of faith communities in addressing HIV and AIDS, we recognize that the values of our religions compel us to respond to the human suffering caused by HIV and AIDS in our communities. These values also provide a unique and distinctive contribution to the overall response to the AIDS pandemic.

Recognising the dignity, sacredness, rights and responsibilities of individuals and communities, we are committed to work to overcome HIV in an inclusive manner, mobilising the human, spiritual, institutional and financial resources that our faith communities possess.

We dedicate ourselves to face the reality of HIV in our societies, to assess the needs in our communities and to prioritize our responses, considering our strengths and comparative advantages. We will also seek to identify and overcome our weaknesses, building on our achievements to make our communities competent in dealing with HIV and AIDS. To be accountable to the people we serve and the wider society, we will also ensure assessment of our progress and the impact we have in our own contexts.

In many ways, religious organizations have already been active in addressing all aspects of HIV and AIDS from raising awareness to providing treatment, care and support to those affected. But we know there is much more we must do, and we are committed to ensure that the tremendous social assets and competencies of our faith communities are energised to engage religious leaders, build partnerships and mobilize communities.

### **Engaging Leadership**

We believe that religious leaders can and must play a constructive role in the response to HIV/AIDS. We are committed to educating and mobilising the leaders to advocate, educate and lead by example in their respective faith communities.

We will develop tools to train the leadership so that they can be effective public voices for raising awareness and reducing the stigma and discrimination so often associated with HIV and AIDS.

We will work to ensure that religious leaders at all levels are equipped to provide accurate, evidence-based information on preventing the spread of the virus, while at the same time focusing on the values and teachings in our faith traditions that also contribute to reducing HIV infections.

### **Building Partnerships**

The enormity of the challenge requires partnerships of unprecedented range and scope. We as faith communities are resolved to develop new partnerships and to strengthen existing ones with other sectors.

We are committed to work in solidarity with people living with HIV and AIDS. We acknowledge that we have not done enough in this area, and have at times contributed to their sense of exclusion and stigmatization. We will work to build trust and to create inter-faith partnerships with positive networks at country, regional and local levels and encourage positive networks within our own communities. We are convinced that by working together we can defeat stigma and discrimination and create inclusive communities.

We emphasize the special role that inter-faith cooperation has played in building bridges across faiths and in helping us to address the challenges posed by HIV and AIDS more

effectively. We are committed to strengthening such partnerships based on mutual respect and focussed on our shared values of human dignity, compassion, and love.

We are committed to strengthen AINA as an effective interfaith network at the regional level, so that it can advocate for the role of faith-based organizations, support national interfaith networks and help share information and coordinate our collective response to AIDS in Asia and the Pacific.

We are also committed to expand our partnerships with governments, UN agencies, NGOs, and other key actors to ensure that our faith communities have the financial, human, and material resources we need to be successful in controlling the pandemic. We are ready to work together, but we urge these sectors to respect and support the unique values and approaches that we as religious communities bring, even as we commit to respect their unique roles.

### **Mobilizing Communities**

We believe that the response to the pandemic has to be centred in the community, and we commit to building caring, equitable communities that lead the way in supporting affected persons, encouraging openness, reducing stigma and discrimination, and addressing social inequities.

We will utilise the structures of our faith communities -- our places of worship, the educational and health facilities, our women's and youth organizations – to provide the full range of prevention, treatment, care and support services.

We will work to incorporate HIV and AIDS information in appropriate ways into our worship rituals, our festivals, our religious education and training of future leaders.

We will also engage our faith communities in holding our governments and other international actors accountable for the commitments they have made to provide increased resources and to work towards universal access to treatment, prevention, care and support services.

In closing, we see this gathering as a starting point for closer cooperation in the future and are committed to carrying out follow up efforts in our countries and across the Asia-Pacific region.

In all these commitments, we seek guidance and support from the divine spirit that animates us and is the source of our being, so that we may play our part in “keeping our promises” to overcome HIV and AIDS and bringing healing and hope to all humanity.

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