

Church of Scotland HIV Programme

“Souper Sunday 2011” elder-led service

Service theme:

“He will bring lasting justice to all.”

(Isaiah 42:3)

This elder-led act of worship has been prepared with Sunday 9th January 2011 in mind, using lectionary Bible readings for that date. It may, however, be modified for use at another Sunday service. The order of service is offered as a guide to how worship might be led in your Souper Sunday celebrations. Please feel free to adapt it to your own local situation, or to use it in its entirety .

Preparations:

- *Recruit four elders to lead worship, plus one or two child reader(s) and one adult reader*
- *Bring a candle, matches and globe for the all-age talk*
- *Consider using our optional images, leaflets, Powerpoint presentation and DVD**
- *Order Gift Aid declaration envelopes* for lunch attenders*
- *Prepare a very simple soup and bread lunch for after the service, either in church or (as catering facilities may dictate) at members’ homes*

**These resources, along with others, may be ordered or downloaded through www.soupersunday.info*

All hymns noted here are taken from the Church Hymnary (fourth edition), although other hymns may be substituted. Both readings printed in this order of service are taken from the Good News Bible.

Order of Service

The four elders leading the service enter and sit in the chancel:

- 1) *Worship leader*
- 2) *Speaker A (to do first prayer and all-age talk)*
- 3) *Child A (to do first prayer)*
- 4) *Child reader*
- 5) *Adult reader*
- 6) *Speaker B (to do first adult talk and intercessions)*
- 7) *Speaker C (to do second adult talk)*

Worship leader:

May the Grace of the Lord Jesus Christ be with us all.

Good morning!

Worship leader gives welcome and intimations, ending with:

Today's service is a special act of worship for "Souper Sunday 2011". All over Scotland and beyond, congregations are being encouraged to set aside a day for prayer and reflection on the subject of HIV. Over the last quarter of a century, this virus has brought deep suffering to many people and many communities around the world. But HIV is also a virus that can be tackled in our time, so that new hope might emerge for those who live with it.

The Church of Scotland HIV Programme works in this important field, co-operating with partner agencies in Africa, Asia, the Middle East and Scotland. Today, the HIV Programme asks us to bring our concerns over HIV before God in this act of worship – a service which will be led by members of our own kirk session and by representatives of our young people.

The theme for our worship has been drawn from the book of the prophet Isaiah, chapter 42, verse 3: "He will bring lasting justice to all". We hope that everyone will be inspired to new hope and fresh action through this time of worship together. We also hope that everyone in church

today, member and visitor alike, will join us in the church hall [*OR ANOTHER NAMED VENUE*] to enjoy together a simple meal of hot soup and bread. All are most welcome at this lunch. At the end of the lunch, donations will be invited to benefit the Church of Scotland HIV Programme.

As we worship God here in [*NAME OF PARISH CHURCH*], so too all over Scotland and in other parts of the world, congregations are showing their support for the HIV Programme. We are part of something far bigger than ourselves, as we look towards God to bring lasting justice for all.

And now, let us take a moment of silence as we prepare to worship almighty God.

[A FEW SECONDS OF SILENCE]

“The world and all that is in it belong to the Lord;

the earth and all that live on it are his.”

Let us worship God as a family of his people, singing to his praise hymn number 530: *One more step along the world I go*. Hymn 530.

[ALL SING]

Speaker A:

Please be seated.

In the first letter from John, we read these words:

“God is light, and there is no darkness at all in him. If, then, we say that we have fellowship with him, yet at the same time live in the darkness, we are lying both in our words and in our actions. But if we live in the light – just as he is in the light – then we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus, his Son, purifies us from every sin.”

Let us pray:

Speaker A: Dear God, in the light of this morning we have a sign of your constancy – day and night, light and dark. In the rhythm of sun and moon, and of summer and winter, we are reminded of your faithful love and care for us.

Child A: God of light, thank you for the light we have woken up to today.

Speaker A: In the light of this day we are reminded of the hope that we have in Christ Jesus, the Light of the world. We are offered new life and a new way of being, encouraging us when life seems dark, and challenging us when our path seems easy.

Child A: God of light, thank you for the hope we have in the Light of the world.

Speaker A: In the light of this day we take courage from the Light which is never put out. We look to Jesus who was tested and tried, tormented and tortured, but who stood firm for the truth. We look to Jesus who, like us, was weary and tired, despondent and dejected, yet who was firm in faith, always standing against the forces of darkness.

Child A: God of light, thank you for the faith you give us, and the strength we find in you.

Speaker A: In the light of this day we are reminded that we too are called to be lights to this world. We too are called to shine like beacons in a dark place. Gentle God, we confess that we often find this difficult. It is often easier to remain silent than to speak up against the majority. It is often easier to follow the actions of others than to stand alone. It is often easier to follow what others say than to think for ourselves.

Child A: God of light, forgive us when we take the easy road into the gloom rather than following the road of light.

Speaker A: In the light of this day we confess that sometimes we do not seek out your light. Our lives together with you need work and patience and perseverance if they are to become lives which serve the needs of our neighbours. It is easier to do our own thing than to take time for others. Forgive us for those times when we say we have fellowship with you but do not match our words to our actions.

Child A: Forgive us Lord, we pray.

[PAUSE]

Speaker A: Words of Dietrich Bonhoeffer:
“God turns to us when we are sorely pressed,
and feeds our souls and bodies with his bread;

for one and all Christ gives himself in death:
through his forgiveness sin will find relief.”

And now we join together in the words of the Lord’s
Prayer, saying ...

All: *Our Father, who art in heaven,
hallowed be thy name.
Thy kingdom come.
Thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven.
Give us this day our daily bread.
And forgive us our debts,
as we forgive our debtors.
And lead us not into temptation,
but deliver us from evil.
For thine is the kingdom, the power, and the glory,
for ever.
AMEN.*

Worship leader:

Our Bible readings today show us that God’s power is
real in our world. More than this, God stands for justice

and hope, calling us to live out our faith in this same way. Our first reading today is taken from the Old Testament, in the Book of the prophet Isaiah, chapter 42, reading from verse 1 to verse 9, and this will be read for us by *[INSERT CHILD'S NAME]*:

Reading 1:

Isaiah 42:1–9 (Child B)

The Lord says, “Here is my servant, whom I strengthen – the one I have chosen, with whom I am pleased. I have filled him with my Spirit, and he will bring justice to every nation. He will not shout or raise his voice or make loud speeches in the streets. He will not break off a bent reed nor put out a flickering lamp. He will bring lasting justice to all. He will not lose hope or courage; he will establish justice on the earth. Distant lands eagerly wait for his teaching.”

God created the heavens and stretched them out; he fashioned the earth and all that lives there; he gave life and breath to all its people. And now the Lord God says

to his servant, “I, the Lord, have called you and given you power to see that justice is done on earth. Through you I will make a covenant with all peoples; through you I will bring light to the nations. You will open the eyes of the blind and set free those who sit in dark prisons.

“I alone am the Lord your God. No other god may share my glory; I will not let idols share my praise. The things I predicted have now come true. Now I will tell you of new things even before they begin to happen.”

AMEN.

Speaker A:

Thank you *[INSERT CHILD'S NAME]* for our first reading.

Now! Here's a question for you: Do you like the summertime?

[Look for lots of nodding heads – hopefully!]

What kind of things did you like about the summer?

[Take a few suggestions from all ages, making sure the congregation hears each one]

Of course, there are lots and lots of things that are good about the summer: warm weather, long school holidays, ice cream, and so much more. For many people, one really good thing about summer time is seeing the light: seeing so much light. After all the darkness of winter, it's just great to look forward to light, light and more light from early on a summer's morning, right through to very late in the evening.

Light, of course, is something that is special to us all the way through the year, and even in the depths of winter, light can be very important to us.

Place unlit candle and box of matches on Table

Maybe at Christmas time you have a candle lit on your table at home. The light of a tiny wee candle can be a very powerful reminder to us of who Jesus is.

[Light candle]

As we remember each Christmas, the Bible tells us that as God's Son, Jesus, is "the Light of the world". It is Jesus himself who brings us the Light of God's great love: in his birth at Christmas; in his life; and in his death on Good Friday; and in his Easter Resurrection.

Although next Christmas seems a long, long way off, today it is good that we can think about light. In our reading from the Old Testament a moment ago, we heard together how God really wants "to bring light to the nations". In other words, God wants his light to shine in all the world. Right here and right now.

Place globe on Table

And today, as we think about Jesus, it's good that we have on our Table not just a candle, but also a globe, reminding us of all our brothers and sisters, wherever they may be, in Europe or Africa or Asia or Australasia or the Pacific or America.

In Jesus we see God's Son, that special, amazing, one and only "Light of the world" coming into our lives with the

promise of God's lasting justice for all people,
everywhere in the world.

But here's a question: if Jesus is the Light of the world,
what are we going to do about it? Are we going let God's
special Light, Jesus Christ, shine in us all year round:
spring, summer, autumn and winter?

The amazing truth is that God can use each one of us –
you and me – to help make justice and peace come true in
our world. And if we decide to help God in making the
world a fairer, kinder, more just place, that will be an
amazing thing for us, and for our world.

In 2011, [*hold up candle*] let your light shine!

Let us pray:

God of light and God of love,

We thank you today for the hope you give us in the birth
of your Son, Jesus Christ. Thank you that he lived our
human life, that he shared in our happiness and our
sadness, that he knew the pain of sadness and despair.

In Christ we see the bright hope of Easter Resurrection;
we see that your love is stronger than any human
suffering. Help us to place our hope and our trust in you
at the start of this new year – and help us to be your lights
in our world's darkness.

In Jesus' Name we ask this. AMEN.

Worship leader:

And now we sing to God's glory a hymn that helps us to
remember that God's light is not just for one season of the
year, but for all of our lives. We sing together, hymn
number 516: *We are marching in the light of God*. After
this, our young people will leave for their groups, and we
will look forward to joining up again at the end of our
service to enjoy our lunch of soup and bread together!
Hymn number 516.

[ALL SING]

Children leave (please note: Souper Sunday children's resources are available through www.soupersunday.info)

Worship leader:

Our second reading this morning is taken from the Book of Psalms. *[INSERT READER'S NAME]* will read for us Psalm 29.

Reading 2:

Psalm 29 (Adult reader)

Praise the Lord, you heavenly beings; praise his glory and power. Praise the Lord's glorious name; bow down before the Holy One when he appears. The voice of the Lord is heard on the seas; the glorious God thunders, and his voice echoes over the ocean. The voice of the Lord is heard in all its might and majesty. The voice of the Lord breaks the cedars, even the cedars of Lebanon. He makes the mountains of Lebanon jump like calves and makes Mount Hermon leap like a young bull. The voice of the Lord makes the lightning flash. His voice makes the

desert shake; he shakes the desert of Kadesh. The Lord's voice shakes the oaks and strips the leaves from the trees while everyone in his Temple shouts, "Glory to God!" The Lord rules over the deep waters; he rules as king forever. The Lord gives strength to his people and blesses them with peace.

AMEN.

Speaker B:

"What good could I possibly do?" That's a question asked by each one of us from time to time. After all, who are we to take this world of suffering and make it better? If we were Nobel Prize winners or prime ministers or presidents, then maybe we would have the know-how or the political clout to make a difference to this world's sorry state.

But we're not.

You and I are just who we are: ordinary folk, with no great influence and (it so often seems) precious little wisdom in the matters of the world.

In a world where there is so much suffering, where so many demands come crowding in upon us from every angle, it's sometimes just as easy to ask that despairing question which started this talk: "What good could I possibly do?"

It's a very real question, of course. Although, for people of faith perhaps it's the wrong question altogether.

When we stop to think about the words of the psalmist which we read together a moment ago, we realise that this writer was more than just a great poet with an eye for a powerful image. The writer of Psalm 29 was someone who could look at the world and see God's powerful hand actively at work in it. The whole of this psalm points to our world being a place where God is not just present, but

where God is active. Active on the foaming seas. Active in the mountain ranges. Active even in the barren desert.

This unseen God whom we worship is a God who comes close, and who shows his power in the here and now of our human existence. God's power is present for each one of us to acknowledge ... if only we will look for that great, divine power in our own lives as Christians.

Whether in the person of Jesus Christ, the Light of the world, whether in nature (as the psalmist so visually points out) or whether in our own relationships of faith and hope and love: God is there.

Yes, even in our daily walk of faith, as we seek to serve our neighbours, God is there. In the words of *Ubi caritas*, that lovely hymn from the Taizé Community, "where there is charity and love, God is there".

Who are we to take this world of suffering and make it better? On our own, I suppose we might be just like anyone else – but we are not alone. We are followers of

Jesus Christ, the Son of the Most High God. We are followers of Jesus Christ, the carpenter's boy who shows us just what his Way of faith can do. We are followers of Jesus Christ, the one who calls us out of our complacency and out of our doubt, to serve.

And to serve in the company of God's greatest servant.

AMEN.

Now let us continue our worship by singing hymn 600:

Spirit of God, unseen as the wind:

[ALL SING]

Speaker C:

So – what does it actually mean to be a follower of Jesus Christ?

One of the most appealing – but also most challenging – aspects of Jesus is the way in which he makes time for the people that other folk have little time for. Whether it's the ordinary fishermen, the tax collectors, the prostitutes, the Samaritans, the blind or the lame, Jesus reaches out to them in a way which assures them they are loved, forgiven and accepted by God. If the church and church members are to take seriously the call to follow Christ, then we too must be aware of people in our own society and in our own world who experience stigma and discrimination, and who lack status in the eyes of their peers.

Today we are celebrating Souper Sunday, which is a chance to spend some time thinking about the Church of Scotland HIV Programme. There is little doubt that HIV and AIDS are still issues, particularly in the developing countries of the world. People living with the virus are often stigmatised and discriminated against. To quote one woman living with HIV: "Long before I die of HIV, I will

die of the loneliness it has brought me.” It is estimated that there are currently 33 million people living with HIV in our world. Given that there is still no cure for HIV or AIDS, there is still a huge amount to be done, both in educating communities so that HIV is not spread more widely, and in caring for those families who are already infected or affected by HIV.

HIV is very much tied in with poverty; poor people are much more vulnerable to infection, whether it be through engaging in risky behaviours in order to earn money to feed their families, or having to live for long periods away from home as migrant labourers in search of work. Illiteracy and lack of access to affordable health care can also be contributory factors to the spread of the virus.

While the development of antiretroviral drugs means that people living with HIV can remain healthy, this great medical advance counts for nothing if these drugs are unavailable or inaccessible. The drugs need to be taken

with food, otherwise they lose their effectiveness. But we know that not everyone can afford even one meal a day.

And while the antiretroviral drugs are paid for by the Global Fund to Fight AIDS, TB and Malaria, there is a real danger, in a time of recession, that the countries of the world will not keep their promise to provide the necessary funding so that everyone who needs the medication can get it.

It would be easy for us to wring our hands and say that there is little we can do about any of this – but we do not wring our hands! Churches know that they have a role to play in their own communities, whether in Zambia, Zimbabwe, Ghana, India, Sri Lanka, Thailand or Scotland (to name but a few countries where we are helping to fund work with HIV.) In a moment you will hear about one such programme, in Malawi, where the church is bringing both practical and spiritual hope to those living with HIV. Such programmes and projects are examples of how the

local churches are taking seriously their commitment to follow Jesus.

Living with HIV is still a risky business – and a frightening one. And the Church’s response to HIV should be not just about charity and compassion. It also has to be about justice. We are reminded in our reading from Isaiah this morning that “He will bring lasting justice to all” – so let us be open to the ways in which we can work for that justice, for all who are living with HIV.

Worship leader:

EITHER:

Do the following talk on Malawi (with or without Powerpoint).

SLIDE

1 Malawi is a land of many contrasts; a land of huge challenges; and a land of great Christian

faithfulness. Today, let’s look together at this small African nation – a country which has much to teach us.

- 2 To visit Malawi is to find a place of unimagined beauty,
- 3 where trees and plants, scenery and wildlife come together in the most amazing ways.
- 4 Yet Malawi is also a country where many people are very poor,
- 5 where work can be hard and rewards can be little.
- 6 In Malawi, some children are born into relative prosperity,
- 7 while others may have little or nothing.
- 8 Often, children are raised by their grandparents, because Mum and Dad have died as a result of HIV.
- 9 Today, many so-called “AIDS orphans” have reached adulthood, and now have to fend for themselves in very difficult circumstances.

10 Malawi, of course, is a country whose history is
tied in to that of Scotland.

11 And the Church in Malawi has long-standing
and highly valued connections to the Church of
Scotland.

12 For people in the Church of Scotland,
“Ekwendeni Hospital” is a name that is very
familiar, though perhaps you are not so familiar
with the frontline work being pioneered by the
hospital’s HIV/AIDS Project.

13 This dedicated team of professionals works with
the financial and prayer support of the Church
of Scotland, reaching out to some of northern
Malawi’s very poorest families and individuals:

14 people who are either infected with HIV, or
affected by it.

15 These men, women and children are helped by
the project, so that they can deal with issues of
HIV in their own lives.

16 This may be through peer education, voluntary
counselling and testing, or the provision of
hospital clinics and vital medicines.

17 One other innovative way in which Ekwendeni
Hospital helps whole communities is through
self-help groups and income generation
schemes.

18 In the remote village of Katula, the “Vitumbiko”
group encourages people living with HIV to get
together, to share their ideas and their concerns.

19 Income generation allows the group to make
money through growing and marketing food for
the wider community.

20 Profits are ploughed back into the scheme,
helping them both to finance HIV care schemes
in their village and to give out loans for making
home life better.

21 The word “Vitumbiko” means “blessings” and
there is no doubt that the people of Katula have
been greatly blessed by this church-led plan for
income generation.

22 Once, HIV was seen as a death sentence by
many, but now thanks to education, medication
and viable sources of income, people are
coming to see that they can genuinely live with
this virus, rather than just dying with it.

23 Men, women and children are realising that life
can be lived in fullness,
24 with even the most unwell being given new
hope, through the love which is being lived out
together.

25 In all of this, the Christian faith is being
practised in the most down-to-earth of ways,
26 with lives being enhanced physically, spiritually
and mentally.

27 Malawi has so many challenges to face,
28 but in so many ways there is real hope for the
future.

29 Children are able to grow up, knowing what
HIV is all about,
30 young people are able to talk in serious ways
about the lifestyle issues which face them,

31 adults are able to live life to the full,
32 and older people are at last able to be confident
that their families will grow and mature to
adulthood.

33 “Vitumbiko” means “blessings” for the people
of Katula, and for so many others in northern
Malawi. This is just one way in which the
church is changing lives in wonderful and
amazing ways.

34 Be part of this great movement for change in our
world.

OR:

[Make this short introduction to the DVD.](#)

The Church of Scotland HIV Programme works in many
of the world’s most economically challenged countries.
One of these is Malawi. Recently, Robin Hill and Carol
Finlay visited this small, land-locked African country to
see for themselves how HIV is being tackled. We are now

going to watch a short DVD presentation on what they found.

DVD on Malawi

Worship leader:

Hopefully we can see that the story of HIV need not be a story of despair. Working together, and seeking God's guidance, we can do our part to be servants of Christ in the midst of very real suffering.

[PAUSE]

Let us reflect now on our need for God's divine wisdom, as we join together to sing hymn number 465: *Be thou my Vision, O Lord of my heart.*

[ALL SING]

Speaker B:

Let us come before God now with our prayers for the world. Let us pray:

Heavenly Father, we pray for everyone who is living with HIV, that they may be aware of your great love for them. Help them to find hope instead of despair, and give them the courage they need to live positively with their diagnosis.

Speaker C:

We pray for all the families of those living with HIV, and for their wider communities, that they may support each other in caring for those who are sick and need care and attention.

Speaker B:

We pray for all the children who have been affected by HIV. We pray for young people who need to take daily medication. And we pray for the sons and daughters who have lost one or both parents because of the virus. May all your children know themselves loved and accepted – not

just by you, but by their families and friends and the communities they live in.

Speaker C:

We ask your blessing on all the doctors and nurses, community workers and volunteers, who dedicate their lives to bringing healing, comfort and hope to those who are sick or suffering. Inspire them with your love, and give them gifts of tenderness, patience and perseverance as they go about their daily work.

Speaker B:

Father, we thank you for the knowledge that HIV projects have been making a real difference to the communities in which they are working. We pray that you will continue to bless this work, so that stigma and discrimination will decrease, and acceptance and genuine caring will increase.

Speaker C:

Lord, we pray for ourselves and our church's response to HIV. We pray for our own Church's HIV Programme, as

it seeks to raise awareness and resources to bring hope to millions.

Help us as your followers to live out your love and compassion, as we show our solidarity with those infected and affected by HIV. Give us the insight to see where and how we can get involved, and give us the courage to speak out for justice for all who live with HIV.

Speaker B:

And now in the silence we bring before you any known to us who are going through difficult times, and who specially need to know your love.

A short time of silence

All these our prayers we ask in Jesus' Name. AMEN.

Worship leader:

And now, we worship God in our weekly congregational offering.

Offering

Worship leader:

Let us pray:

Gentle God,

We know your many blessings to be real in our lives, and we thank you for all the signs of your love that we have.

Accept this offering we pray, and bless your Church as it serves in Christ's ministry, whether near at hand or far round the world.

In Jesus' Name. AMEN.

A word of thanks goes to everyone who has taken part in today's service and in Souper Sunday as a whole. And a reminder to everyone that a warming lunch of soup and bread awaits us. All are most welcome to join us for lunch at *[INSERT LUNCH VENUE]*.

And now we close our time of worship by singing the 61st paraphrase, which is found at hymn number 424:
Blest be the everlasting God. Hymn number 424.

[ALL SING]

Worship leader:

Let us go now to love God and serve our neighbour; to serve God and love our neighbour.

And may the blessing of God Almighty, Father, Son and Holy Spirit, be with us all, this day and for ever more.

AMEN.