

Church of Scotland HIV Programme

World AIDS DAY Service
Sunday 1st December 2013

“Light and Hope in Advent”

This elder-led act of worship is offered for World AIDS Day 2013, which falls on Advent Sunday, 1st December. Please feel free to adapt the service to your own local situation, or simply to use it in its entirety.

- *At the close of worship, you might organise a retiring offering to benefit the work of the Church of Scotland HIV Programme. Alternatively, following the pattern of “Souper Sunday”, you may wish to prepare a very simple soup-and-bread lunch for after the service, either in church or (as catering facilities may dictate) at members’ homes. After lunch, an offering can be taken up. Gift Aid declaration envelopes may be ordered from the HIV Programme office: hiv@cofscotland.org.uk*

Preparations:

- *Recruit four elders to lead worship;*
- *Bring props, as noted in the all-age talk;*
- *Consider using the World AIDS Day Powerpoint presentation, available from the Church of Scotland HIV Programme.*

All hymns noted here are taken from the Church Hymnary (fourth edition). Additional hymns are offered at the end of this order of service. Both readings printed here are taken from the New Revised Standard Version of the Bible.

Order of Service

The four participants leading the service enter and sit in the chancel.

Worship leader:

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

Good morning!

Worship leader gives welcome and intimations, ending with:

Sunday the first of December 2013 is special for a variety of reasons. First of all, as this is the first Sunday of Advent, today marks the start of our journey through the darkness of the world into the Light of Christ. Advent Sunday also marks the start of a new Christian year.

In addition, however, the first of December is marked around the globe as World AIDS Day: a point in the calendar when we are encouraged to pause and reflect on HIV in our world. Since this year it falls on a Sunday, we have a great opportunity to celebrate this in a special elder-led service created by the Church of Scotland HIV Programme. This is a service of “Advent Hope and Advent Light” for World AIDS Day, in which we will bring before God in our worship our concerns for all who are infected or affected by HIV, whether at home or overseas.

If organising a “Souper Sunday” lunch, please use the following:

At the close of our service today, all are most welcome to join us for a simple soup-and-bread lunch in *[INSERT LUNCH VENUE]*. At the lunch, please feel free to make a donation towards the important work being done by the Church of Scotland HIV Programme.

If not organising a “Souper Sunday” lunch, please use the following:

At the close of our service today, there will be a retiring offering to benefit the work of the HIV Programme. If you wish, you are very welcome to make a donation.

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

[A FEW SECONDS OF SILENCE]

“I will wait for the Lord ... and I will hope in him.”

[Isaiah 8:17]

Let us worship God as we sing to his praise hymn number 472: *Come, thou long-expected Jesus.*

[ALL SING]

Speaker A:

Please be seated.

[PAUSE]

Listen to these words of Jesus from the gospel according to St Luke:

“Stand upright and hold your heads high, because your liberation is near.”

Let us pray:

Lord God of all Creation,

We turn to you today in worship and in praise.

We give you thanks for your great goodness to us; for your love which brings galaxies into being, and which brings each one of us into life.

We worship you now, our Lord and our God, praising you for your goodness and mercy. May this time of service be blessed for us by knowing that you are with us in this place. And may we go from here out into the world, strengthened in your service and renewed in our faith.

Loving God,

We know that there are times in our lives when we have done the wrong things rather than the right: when we have acted cruelly or spoken unwisely; when we have chosen to go our own way or forgotten your word of love to us.

Forgive us Lord, and help us to turn to you. By your Grace may we become your able and willing servants as we seek to follow in the Way of Christ, and as we look to play our part in the coming of your Kingdom here on earth.

In this season of Advent, guide each one of us, whether young or old, so that we might keep our eyes on the flickering light in the darkness: a light which no darkness can put out. Make us faithful fellow-travellers as we journey together through these weeks of preparation, and bring us in due course safe into the knowledge and appreciation of Christmas in all its glory – “Immanuel: God with us”.

And now we join together in the words of the prayer which Jesus taught, 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.*

ALL-AGE TALK:

Props:

- *A nice boxed Christmas present wrapped in bright (but not Christmas!) paper, containing four slips of paper (perhaps in four smaller boxes?) each with one word: 1) Hope; 2) Peace; 3) Love; 4) Joy; **
- *An Advent wreath with a red World AIDS Day ribbon pinned (safely!) to the first candle;*
- *A lighter or matches.*
- *(*You may wish to have in addition illustrations to represent each word, e.g. small candle to represent hope, a dove for peace, a heart for love and a smiling face for joy)*

Speaker B:

What do I have here? *[Likely response: A Christmas present!]*

It certainly looks like a Christmas present, doesn't it? But really, this is another kind of present altogether. This is what we might call an Advent present. Does it look like a nice Advent present? *[Yes!]*

What do you think might be inside? *[A cuddly toy! A fire engine! A computer!]*

Well, on this Advent Sunday why don't we just get a couple of volunteers to come up and open this amazing-looking Advent present?

[Volunteers 1 and 2 come forward and open the present, only to be disappointed by finding four pieces of A4 paper inside the boxes, each with a single word printed on it: the first, "Hope"; the second, "Peace"; the third, "Love"; and, lastly, the fourth, "Joy"]

How incredibly, unbelievably, disappointing! Just when we thought we were going to find a lovely present inside, what do we find? Four bits of paper! That doesn't look like much of a present to me!

Oh well. Let's take a look anyway, shall we? What does the first piece of paper say?

[Volunteer 1 reads out: "Hope"]

The first present in our parcel is "Hope". You know, all over the world, there are boys and girls (and grown-ups too) who have lost all hope in their lives. For one reason or another, life is so, so hard for them, and sometimes it feels like the whole world is against them. When things are that bad, hope becomes really important.

Hope is a great, wonderful present, whether you're giving hope or receiving it.

Let's move on to our second piece of paper.

[Volunteer 2 reads out: "Peace"]

"Peace" is the second present to come out of our Christmas parcel. If we stop to think about all the places, near or far, where people are falling out with other people, or hurting them, or even killing them, you can see what an amazing gift the gift of peace would be. Peace is about building up friendships and making the world a better, safer place.

I think peace would be a really brilliant gift, especially if you don't have any.

We've got two more presents here, so let's get two more volunteers up.

[Volunteer 3 reads out: "Love"]

Love. This is a really great gift, whether on Advent Sunday, on Christmas Day or on any day of the year. Think how much we all need love. Think how good it feels to know that we're loved. And think how important it is to live God's love in our lives, sharing his light with anyone who finds themselves in the shadows of darkness.

One last present.

[Volunteer 4 steps forward and reads out: "Joy"]

"Joy". That's a word which we often hear at this time of year. We sing about "Joy to the world," and the story of Jesus' birth brings "tidings of comfort and joy". Maybe joy is one of the very best presents we can share each December, because the joy we feel in celebrating Christmas is all about welcoming God's Son into our world and into our lives, as we realise that joy comes to us in Jesus Christ, this Christmas and every Christmas.

[Pause for a couple of seconds]

Thank you to our young friends as you go back to your seats. A big round of applause for all our volunteers!

[Round of applause as volunteers sit down]

These four gifts which were inside our Advent present can show us so much about what Advent is about, and these same four gifts are reflected in our Advent wreath.

An Advent wreath, of course, is made up of candles: four around the edge and one in the middle. The four around the edge are the candles of hope, of peace, of love and of joy. Each Sunday up to Christmas, we will light these candles,

one by one. Then on Christmas Day itself we will also light the one in the middle, “the Christ candle”, to show that Jesus, the Light of the world, comes to us at Christmas.

Today we are at the very start of our journey through Advent, and on this World AIDS Day we see that our first candle (the candle of Hope) has a red AIDS ribbon on it. This is to remember the 34 million people around the world who are living with HIV. May this candle be a reminder for them, as well as us, that hope is real in the world this Advent season.

Let’s choose another volunteer to help light our first candle now, the candle of Hope.

[A young volunteer, accompanied by a responsible adult, comes forward to light the candle of Hope, before returning to their seat]

Even in the shadows of our living, Hope looks into the darkness, seeking the Light. Today, as the season of Advent begins, let us set out on our own journey of hope, leading us from here all the way to a manger in Bethlehem.

Let us pray:

Advent God,

As we light our candle of hope, we ask that you would go with us, as we travel into the darkness of Advent.

May this single light fire each one of us with hope that Christ is coming,

into the coldness of our world,

into the brokenness of our lives,

into yearning of our humanity.

This prayer we offer in the name of Jesus Christ,

Your Son, our Lord. Amen.

Worship leader:

In a moment, the children will leave for their groups. First, we are going to sing a hymn which brings together all the themes of Advent which we found a moment ago in our present. Hymn number 279: *Make way, make way, for Christ the King*. Hymn 279.

[ALL SING]

Children leave

Speaker C:

Our Bible readings today focus on the coming of Jesus Christ into the world, as the Light in our darkness.

Our Old Testament reading this morning is taken from the book of the prophet Isaiah. We read from Isaiah chapter 2, verses 2 to 5:

2 In days to come the mountain of the Lord's house shall be established as the highest of the mountains, and shall be raised above the hills; all the nations shall stream to it. 3 Many peoples shall come and say, "Come, let us go up to the mountain of the Lord, to the house of the God of Jacob; that he may teach us his ways and that we may walk in his paths." For out of Zion shall go forth instruction, and the word of the Lord from Jerusalem. 4 He shall judge between the nations, and shall arbitrate for many peoples; they shall beat their swords into ploughshares, and their spears into pruning hooks; nation shall not lift up

sword against nation, neither shall they learn war any more. 5 O house of Jacob, come, let us walk in the light of the Lord! AMEN.

ADULT TALK 1

Worship leader:

Here we are at the first day of a new Christian year: Advent Sunday, a time when we look ahead towards a special day. And as we look at the very first words of the very first Bible reading of this new Christian year, what words do we see?

These are the words: “In days to come ...”.

Our Old Testament reading today is looking forward in time, towards a point when something big is going to happen.

Of course, the season of Advent is all about looking forward. Just think back to when you were a child. You knew that as the days grew shorter and as the weather grew colder and as the Christmas cards started flopping on to the doormat, something big was just around the corner. You came to see that this time of year really is a period of expectation.

For us, expectation can go much further than looking forward to presents and parties and festive TV specials. Even in this noisy, crowded, materialistic 21st century of ours, Advent still holds out the possibility of looking forward with the prophet Isaiah to those things that will come to pass, “in days to come”.

When we stop to think about it, we realise that Christianity is a faith which keeps on moving onwards, engaging our hearts and challenging our minds in fresh ways, season by season, year by year:

Advent, then Christmas.

Lent, then Easter, then Pentecost.

Season by season, year by year.

What we have in the Church is not simply some story that happened many lifetimes ago. What we have, rather, is news: Good News of the Son of God who is born for us in Bethlehem, born for us in our lives, no matter where we may be living; no matter when we may be living.

This Good News came to us in Christ some 2000 years ago, and in those 20 centuries the Gospel of Jesus has spread across the whole world, taking root in churches, and in those churches' members. Now, as Advent arrives with us once more, all those people in all those places find themselves looking ahead to the celebration of Christmas once again.

But make no mistake: the prophet Isaiah is concerned with more than a festive party or a family get-together. This prophet has far bigger things in mind:

For out of Zion shall go forth instruction, and the word of the Lord from Jerusalem. He shall judge between the nations, and shall arbitrate for many peoples; they shall beat their swords into ploughshares, and their spears into pruning hooks; nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war any more.

When Isaiah looks forward, he looks forward in big ways. A day will come, he says, when all the old ways of the world will be overtaken; when God's Kingdom of justice and of peace will truly be brought in. Then, when that day comes, lethal weapons of destruction will be hammered into useful tools of farming. Violence and warfare will have no place, and peace will finally reign.

You might well ask what kind of wishful thinking this might be. But surely the prophet Isaiah has an important truth to pass on to future generations, including our own: a truth which speaks of a world at peace under God's reign. That

Kingdom is what God ushers in through his Son, Jesus Christ. And for us it is a Kingdom to which we look and for which we work. So let us seek God's guidance, playing our part as best we can, so that God's Kingdom on earth can be brought ever closer.

What is this season of Advent all about? Advent is a season for each one of us to think our way, and feel our way, and pray our way from darkness into light. And in our thinking and feeling and praying, we might well find ourselves surprised by the God of Advent, who is there before us, working for the coming of his Kingdom precisely where that Kingdom is so badly needed: right here on earth.

At the start of this brief talk, at the start of Advent, at the start of this new Christian year, I read out those words from the start of our reading : "In days to come". But now, at the end of this same talk, let's just hear this reading's closing verse, because it is that verse which should be our guide in days to come. Surely we can find wisdom in his words: "O house of Jacob, come, let us walk in the light of the Lord!" AMEN.

Worship leader:

And now let us sing a hymn which speaks of God's divine Light in our dark world. Hymn number 543: *Christ, be our light*. Hymn 543.

[ALL SING]

Worship leader:

WHAT IS WORLD AIDS DAY? (*PowerPoint slides available; slides 1 – 7*)

World AIDS Day is held on the first of December each year and is an opportunity for people worldwide to unite in the fight against HIV, to show their support for people living with HIV and to commemorate people who have died as a result of the virus. World AIDS Day was first held in 1988.

Since the virus was discovered in the 1980s, over 30 million people world-wide have died from HIV- or AIDS- related diseases.

Globally, there are estimated to be over 34 million people today living with HIV; two-thirds of those affected are in sub-Saharan Africa, though there are few countries in the world where there are not people living with HIV. In the UK there are over 100,000.

These days, fewer people are dying and education is helping people to be more aware of the issues presented by HIV. Even so, in 2011 there were 1.7 million deaths and 2.5 million new infections worldwide.

There is still no cure for or vaccination against HIV. In recent years, however, antiretroviral medication has been available; if taken regularly it allows people living with HIV to lead a relatively normal life. However, these ARVs are dependent on people being able to access them, and governments being able to provide them. Currently, the Global Fund to fight AIDS, TB and Malaria enables about 50% of those who need the ARVs to get them.

The other huge challenge facing people living with HIV is the stigma and discrimination which so often come with an HIV Positive diagnosis.

Today, many scientific advances have been made in HIV treatment, there are laws to protect people living with HIV and we understand so much more about the condition. But despite this, people do not know the facts about how to protect themselves and others from HIV. Also, stigma and discrimination remain a reality for many people living with HIV. World AIDS Day is

important as it reminds the public and Government that HIV has not gone away – there is still a vital need to raise money, increase awareness, fight prejudice and improve education.

Through its HIV Programme, the Church of Scotland is currently supporting 35 projects around the world, helping local churches to respond to the challenge of HIV in their own communities. Thank you for your support and prayers for this work.

Speaker C:

Our New Testament reading is taken from St Paul's letter to the Romans chapter 13, verses 11 to 14.

11 Besides this, you know what time it is, how it is now the moment for you to wake from sleep. For salvation is nearer to us now than when we became believers; 12 the night is far gone, the day is near. Let us then lay aside the works of darkness and put on the armour of light; 13 let us live honourably as in the day, not in revelling and drunkenness, not in debauchery and licentiousness, not in quarrelling and jealousy. 14 Instead, put on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make no provision for the flesh, to gratify its desires. AMEN.

Speaker A:

Just as the prophet Isaiah spoke of the need for us to walk in the light of God, so too St Paul speaks about overcoming darkness by putting on “the armour of light”. For Paul, life could be seen as a battle between our terrible darkness and God's great light. Perhaps this isn't too surprising when you consider the importance which light had in bringing Paul to faith. On that famous road to Damascus, Saul, the great enemy of the early Christians, saw the light of Christ at first hand, and so found his life dramatically and completely turned around.

However you look at that “road to Damascus experience”, it is clear that Saul had seen the light and would never again embrace the darkness.

In our world today, there is so much darkness, whether in terms of hatred and fear, poverty and debt, sickness and suffering. When we stop to consider the kind of issues faced by people who are living with HIV, we realise that their view of life can be one of real darkness.

To live with this virus is to live with uncertainty in terms of health, but the problems go much further than that. So often, family and friends do not understand – perhaps they don’t even want to understand. Rejection, stigma and isolation are commonplace, with all sorts of discrimination having to be tackled, whether in the home, the classroom or the workplace.

Into this terrible darkness, however, it is possible to shine some much-needed light, and that is exactly what the Church of Scotland HIV Programme has done for more than a decade. Let’s hear together now about three exciting projects where our involvement has helped make a big difference.

Speaker B: (PowerPoint slides available to accompany these stories))

(Slide 8) In Nepal, Mr and Mrs Taru are HIV positive, and found themselves ostracised within their community. But thanks to a special project, the couple were able to join a support group for people living with HIV; Mrs Taru attended various meetings and training sessions, and the group gave her a small loan for her and her husband to set up businesses. Now, he does cycle maintenance while she runs a small shop. They have a regular income, and are both receiving regular medical treatment for their HIV. Also, they are able to tell their neighbours about HIV and how to deal with the virus. As a result, the villagers respond well to them, seeing their courageous work. Mrs Taru says: “I am really happy because these people who behaved badly towards me now respect me.”

Speaker C:

(Slide 9) In Zimbabwe, the Presbyterian Church runs Lovemore Children's Home for street children, some of whom are HIV-positive. A grant from the Church of Scotland enabled them to set up a project where hens are bought and reared, with both eggs and chickens being sold to raise money. This has had a huge impact on the community, helping the Children's Home to buy more food, to pay for the boys' education, and to provide necessary medication when they are ill. Apart from this, the project has raised the profile of Lovemore Children's Home in the local community.

Worship leader:

(Slide 10) In Edinburgh, a charity named Positive Help runs a transport service for people who are infected or affected by HIV. Volunteer drivers give time each week to take people to hospital appointments, or to do their shopping, as well as helping families to get a break. The mother of one young transport client told Positive Help: "Without your help, Sophie wouldn't be able to get to play-scheme, and it's been great for her confidence and has helped to bring her out of her shell."

(There are another two stories which can be used as well as or instead of any of the three above – see the end of this document)

Speaker A:

Whether at home or abroad, great things are happening through the Church of Scotland HIV Programme, as a result of commitment and determination to shed light in the darkness of life.

As Church members, we can, each one of us, come to an understanding of what HIV is all about. If we choose to do that, we ourselves will exchange a little bit of darkness with some much-needed light.

We can, each one of us, make sure that our congregation is competent to deal with HIV issues in church, community and world. If we choose to do that, we will be walking, not in darkness but in light.

And we can, each one of us, tackle head-on the most practical problems of HIV and AIDS in our world, bringing hope to those in despair. Surely, if we can do this, we will be bringing light not only to ourselves but to countless others, far round the world. AMEN.

Worship leader:

We join to sing hymn number 277: *Hark the glad sound! the Saviour comes.*
Hymn 277.

[ALL SING]

Speaker B (after inviting the congregation to sit):

In our prayers for the world and the Church, there will be a response. When you hear the words, “May the light of Christ shine in our darkness”, please feel free to respond by saying, “and help us show your love”.

Let us pray:

Speaker B:

Loving God, in this Advent season of hope, we pray for all who are sad or lonely, and for all who mourn.

We pray for people who are struggling to provide for their families, and for all affected by poverty or inadequate healthcare.

May the light of Christ shine in our darkness, **and help us show your love.**

Speaker C:

Loving God, in this Advent season of peace, we pray for everyone who is suffering from a lack of peace.

We pray for people struggling with family conflicts, and for all affected by violence or war.

We pray for peace with justice for the people of every country, and we seek your wisdom for our world's leaders.

May the light of Christ shine in our darkness, **and help us show your love.**

Speaker B:

Loving God, in this Advent season of love, we pray that you will help our congregation – and churches around the world – to share the Good News of Christ. Help Christians everywhere to commit themselves to the struggle against HIV in our world.

We pray in particular for our Church of Scotland HIV Programme and for the work of all our partners overseas and in Scotland.

May the light of Christ shine in our darkness, **and help us show your love.**

Speaker C:

Loving God, in this Advent season of joy, we pray for all who are living with HIV, or affected by it, that they may live positive and fulfilling lives.

We pray for all who are ill, and for people experiencing fear and isolation because of stigma and discrimination.

We pray for the provision of appropriate healthcare, medication and social support.

May the light of Christ shine in our darkness, **and help us show your love.**

Speaker B:

Loving God, in this Advent time of expectation, we pray for our families and friends, for our communities and for ourselves.

Encourage us to love widely and deeply.

Help us all to celebrate Christmas with joy and hope.

May the light of Christ shine in our darkness, **and help us show your love.**

Speaker C:

Loving God as we prepare to celebrate the coming of your Son Jesus Christ to our world we pause for a few moments to bring you our own silent prayers of concern.

[15 seconds of silence]

May the light of Christ shine in our darkness, **and help us show your love.**

We make these and all our prayers in Jesus' Name. Amen.

Worship leader:

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

Offering

Worship leader:

Let us pray:

Loving God,

As we celebrate your love and give thanks for the light of Christ,

we dedicate to you our offering,

and with it we dedicate also the service of our congregation,

the working of our hands,

the thinking of our minds,

the loving of our hearts,

and the living of our lives.

We ask this prayer in Jesus' name. AMEN.

Thank you to everyone who has played their part in our special World AIDS Day service this morning.

If organising a "Souper Sunday" lunch, please use the following:

And don't forget that after the benediction we will be gathering in [*INSERT LUNCH VENUE*] to enjoy a simple lunch of soup and bread together. All are welcome, especially any visitors who are here in church today.

If not organising a "Souper Sunday" lunch, please use the following:

A brief reminder that at the close of our service today, there will be a retiring offering to benefit the work of the HIV Programme.

And now we close our time of worship by singing a great hymn of hopefulness and devotion. Hymn number 192: *All my hope on God is founded*. Hymn 192.

[*ALL SING*]

Worship leader:

Let us go in peace and in hope, seeking the Light of God in our darkness. And may the blessing of God Almighty, Father, Son and Holy Spirit, be with us all, this Advent-tide and for ever more. AMEN.

Service timed at 52 minutes.

Some alternative hymns:

A variety of Advent hymns from CH4 (numbers 273 to 291)

Some alternative HIV Programme stories:

(Slide 11) **In Chileka , Malawi**, the Presbyterian Church has organised training for 50 local volunteers to help them to provide home-based care for people living with HIV in their own community. This outreach has enabled people living with HIV to find acceptance and help from a church which they had previously found to be judgmental and unsympathetic. Rev Hartley Zulu, the local pastor, says there is so much less discrimination and so much more care now, both in the community and in the congregation.

(Slide 12) **In Pune, India**, our partner organisation DISHA runs a weekly support group which is a lifeline for people living with HIV; here they get medical advice and counselling, as well as a safe environment where they can socialise with others. One of their project workers describes the effect this is having on them; she says “when we first started, many of our clients were feeling hopeless, abandoned and in some cases, suicidal. However, as time progressed so did their outlook on life. Through our community outreach, awareness programmes and educational workshops, they began to have hope for their lives. Our clients now discuss dreams of getting married and having a fulfilling life. It is great to see this renewed hope in their lives.”