



Guidelines for AIDS Candlelight Service

Compiled and Distributed by CABSA and Diaconia AIDS Task Group

Date: Sunday 15 May 2022 (Fifth Easter Sunday)

Focus text: Revelations 21:1-6

The New Jerusalem ... filled with transformed people

Introduction

The International AIDS Candlelight Memorial, held on the third Sunday of May every year, is not only an opportunity to remember the people we have lost but also to honour those who dedicated their lives to helping people living with and affected by HIV and continue to mobilise our communities in solidarity. People living with HIV started the International AIDS Candlelight Memorial in 1983 and since then there have been thousands of events organized across the world by community-based organisations, as well as locally in Southern Africa by CABSA and all her partner organizations for the past 21 years. Such events have helped raise awareness about HIV and more importantly have helped break down stigma within our communities.

The International AIDS Candlelight Memorial is also a campaign to mobilise communities and raise social consciousness about HIV and AIDS. With almost 38 million people globally living with HIV today, the International AIDS Candlelight Memorial serves as an important platform for global solidarity, breaking down barriers of stigma and discrimination, and giving hope to new generations.¹

Liturgy

Welcome

Today, on the fifth Sunday of Easter, we commemorate AIDS Candlelight Memorial Day. We are reminded of the HIV epidemic that has devastated so many lives across the world. Therefore, we dedicate this service to raise awareness about the epidemic, but also to call on us as people of faith to stand closer and intensify our involvement in promoting health and human dignity and rights to all people, including those of us who are living with HIV.

We greet you and welcome you in the wonderful name of God our Father, God the Son and God the Holy Spirit.

The same God who created heaven and earth, and who also created us all, in God's image.

¹ Adapted from <https://gnplus.net/project/international-aids-candlelight-memorial/> and downloaded on 6 May 2022.

Greeting:

Praise the LORD from the heavens;
praise him in the heights above.

² Praise him, all his angels;
praise him, all his heavenly hosts.

³ Praise him, sun and moon;
praise him, all you shining stars.

⁴ Praise him, you highest heavens
and you waters above the skies.

⁵ Let them praise the name of the LORD,
for at his command they were created, Psalm 148: 1-5

Praise and Worship (*Suggested hymns*)

Shine Jesus Shine <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=J3iB30gCqAc>

Great in Power <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PBo9yIUWEEc>

Prayer of Confession and the Lord's Prayer²

Dear Heavenly Father
You are our Father in heaven,
yet we have often ignored your loving guidance;
we fail to acknowledge your place as Creator above creation.
Your name is to be honored and praised,
yet "me" and "I" permeate our speech;
we speak your name only in crisis or panicked alarm.
Your kingdom should be our priority,
but we find it much easier to make excuses for what is,
instead of acting to bring heaven to earth.
You provide all that we need,
yet we silently take from the provision of others
and claim it as blessing.
You forgive our many sins,
but we would rather cling to what we know,
resisting the changes you require.
You pardon all those who sin against you,
and still, we keep score and hold grudges,
calling it "justice."
You deliver us from evil and are present in the midst of trial,

² Written by John S. Woods, downloaded from [106723.pdf \(baylor.edu\)](#) on 6 May 2022.

yet our faith is constantly wavering.
Yet we want to be different,
we want to practice what we preach;
therefore, we practice by praying as you taught us to pray:

**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 trespasses,
as we forgive those who trespass against us.
And lead us not into temptation,
but deliver us from evil.
For thine is the kingdom,
and the power, and the glory,
for ever and ever. Amen.**

Litany and Lighting of the Candle

Leader: Lord, we know that we must persevere to not only keep the focus on HIV, but to intensify it. As we do this, we are reminded that you are our God. You are the Almighty God, the resurrected Christ, the loving Father and the ever-present Holy Spirit. In the midst of this crisis, we turn to you and light this candle to remind us that our hope, our strength and our courage to do this, is in You.

Light the candle

All: Our Hope is in you Lord

Leader: This candle is lit for all of us who are living with HIV. Be it in our own bodies, our homes, our loved ones, our sisters and brothers, or the strangers we do not know.

All: Our strength is in you Lord

Leader: This candle is also lit to remind us that we have the potential to stand up, stand closer and make a difference.

All: Our courage is in you Lord

Leader: So, let us worship our Lord,
The Lord who touched the lepers,
The Lord who touched the lonely,
The Lord who touches our hearts today and enables us to be symbols of hope.

All: Lord give us the strength and the courage to embody your hope and love in a world with HIV.

Amen.

Call to worship

Today ... we gather to offer ourselves to God.
... we remember in gratitude Christ's gift to us.
... we re-imagine through the sacred words of Scripture.
... we hope in the promised reign of God.
... we listen for the Spirit's whisper.
Today ...we proclaim we have come to worship God.

Sisters and brothers, let us rejoice anew in the vision of John:

"I saw a new heaven and a new earth!"

We are the church that lives into God's future today.

A church united across space and time.

A church of many races, languages and ethnicities.

A church that lives by the work of God in Christ
that was, is now, and is still to come.

The one who is seated on the throne says to us:

"See, I am making all things new!"

Scripture Reading

Revelations 21: 1-6

Sermon guidelines³

In Revelation 21:1-6 John shares his most glorious vision with us: the new Jerusalem descending from above, filling the earth with its golden presence.

We tend to think of the new Jerusalem as a beautiful place filled with glamorous things. And we tend to forget that it will be filled ... with people! Transformed people.

Yes, let's remind ourselves today that the new Jerusalem will be a very human place, a humane place. A place where people will have good values, transformed values, the type of values people need to live in harmony with one another, and in relationship with God.

The new Jerusalem will be the earth transformed, recreated, remade. But away from what must it be recreated? What is wrong with the old earth, and what will be right with the new one?

³ *Written By: Professor Christina Landman, Former CABSA Board Member, Director Research: Research Institute for Theology and Religion, University of South Africa.*

What is wrong with the world are those things that the prophets had warned Israel against for many centuries. They are transgression, violence against one another, poor leadership, and injustices.

That will all change, says Revelation 21:1-6. Let's look now at the four things which this text tells us will characterize the radical transformation:

- The new Jerusalem will be a holy city (verse 2). It will be without transgression. No corruption, gossiping, stealing and all the other things people do to one another.
- In the new Jerusalem there will be good leadership (verse 3). Because God will stay amongst the people. He will lead them. He will give them direction and hope.
- In the new Jerusalem there will be no more violence (verse 4). God will wipe the tears from our eyes.
- In the new Jerusalem there will be life for everybody. God will give water from the fountain of life to everybody. There will be no discrimination, no injustice towards anybody.

We are all, in some way or another, affected by HIV and AIDS. For all of us the vision of the new Jerusalem is purely and simply good news.

In the new Jerusalem a contra-culture will be established. The culture of today, to harm and undermine each other, to strive for power at the cost of others, to perpetuate violence against one another, to steal people's dignity and their lives from them – that will come to an end. Society will be radically transformed to a place where we will welcome each other to life.

We are now in the fifth week after Easter. And we need to remind ourselves what happened at the first Easter. Jesus was resurrected from the grave. And thus, a new dispensation has been introduced. Life on earth is no longer the same. The transformation of society has begun.

And we are all part of it. Potentially, the new Jerusalem has already come. And all of us, in whatever way we are affected by HIV and AIDS, are part of it. It is up to all of us to work towards changing this world into a place where there will be no transgression, no violence, no discrimination, no injustice.

Let's all start today to be agents for non-violence, justice, equality, dignity ... and life for all.

Prayer

You can read this prayer out loud, or you could play the prepared video clip.

The clip can be viewed here and downloaded here:

<https://drive.google.com/open?id=1WYQGlg3nxEc4mKi3xPBeeQH46X4BxBxU>

Caring God, sovereign of every corner of creation, hear our prayers on behalf of our children, our sisters and brothers across the street and around the globe. After so many decades that HIV and AIDS has been in our midst, and millions of lives have been lost and devastated, there are some of

us for whom HIV has become very near and very real, but there are also some of us who still only know HIV from a distance. Whether it is close or far, today we would like to join people of faith worldwide as we remember these lives, and as we reflect on the HIV epidemic, Lord, we are convinced that we cannot and don't want to ignore it.

Lord, we would like to show love and compassion to everyone who is living with the realities of HIV. We would like to do this by first confessing our own prejudice and ignorance about it. Forgive us our attitudes that easily hurt and discriminate.

As faith community we would like to reach out to people who have been hurt and rejected, especially by the church. We would like to embrace, support and accompany people on a journey of healing and peace.

Dear God, grant us the grace to be a welcoming place where people will feel safe to worship free from judgment.

Help us to respond in practical ways to assure that treatment and proper medical care are available to all. We honour you for important breakthroughs in HIV treatment and access to it, but Lord, more is needed.

We pray specifically for those who because of poverty do not have access to proper care or treatment. If we could be the instruments through whom everyone accesses the treatment they really need, let our hearts not be hardened, my Lord.

Almighty God, have mercy on us and rescue us. Give us Hope, give us strength and God, give us the courage to stand closer.

Amen

Hymns:

El Shaddai

Lord make me an instrument,

Benediction

May the Creator who called you to imagine in Christ's name and for Christ's people,

give you the faith to walk unknown paths,

the courage to walk with humility,

the audacity to speak what matters,

and the joy of journeying with others,

so that all God's people might catch a vision of "Thy Kingdom come,"

in the name of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

Amen.

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