

# #LESENDIT

## World AIDS Day Theme for 2017

### WHAT IS WORLD AIDS DAY?

World AIDS Day is held on the 1<sup>st</sup> December each year and is an opportunity for people worldwide to unite in the fight against HIV, show their support for people living with HIV and to commemorate people who have died. World AIDS Day was the first ever global health day, held for the first time in 1988.

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### WORSHIP RESOURCES FOR WORLD AIDS DAY

(Additional resources for World AIDS Day can be found at [www.umglobalaidsfund.com](http://www.umglobalaidsfund.com))



#### A Bible Message for World AIDS Day

(Author: Rev. Dr. Donald E. Messer, Executive Director, Center for Health & Hope, [www.centerforhealthandhope.org](http://www.centerforhealthandhope.org))

Based on Readings from the Lectionary:

*Revised Common Lectionary*

#### Lesson 1

Exodus 12:1-14 or Ezekiel 33:7-11

#### Lesson 2

Romans 13:8-14

#### Psalm

Psalm 149 or Psalm 119:33-40

#### Gospel

Matthew 18:15-20

Focus Text: **Psalm 149: *It's Not Always Easy to Praise God's Name***

I read and re-read these biblical lectionary passages. These collections are popular with some Christians, as they encourage people to read widely throughout the Scriptures and not to skip

over unfamiliar or unpopular sections. Their weakness is they also fail to cover everything and often try to put together some passages that really don't fit together. They also give more prominence to some scripture than frankly I think is worth underscoring in light of the God's love in Jesus Christ. Overall, perhaps I should just think of the lectionary as a tool that reminds me that neither life nor scripture is always coherent or easy to understand.

However, except for a couple of strange verses, Psalm 149 is a great reminder of God's goodness and the joy we experience in praising our Lord. Around the world, I have been amazed meeting people living in extreme poverty and often with HIV, but yet singing the praise of God. Yet I understood in India when a poor widow, whose husband had died from AIDS, shook her fist in the sky, and said "I'm so angry at God that I am forced to sell my body to feed my family." Life is not always fair and it is not always easy to "praise his name with dancing, making melody to him with tambourine and lyre."

At times, all of us feel doubts and even anger at God and the circumstances of our life. The good news is that, despite our wavering, God still loves us and seeks our goodness. God suffers with the suffering; God is marginalized with the marginalized; God "takes pleasure in his people" and seeks to "adorn the humble with victory." How and when, we do not always know or see, but in faith we proclaim God's ultimate goodness.

Personally, I believe God is active in the world, seeking to be co-partners with all of us in a loving, healing ministry. God depends upon us to be instruments of divine grace. God wills the end of HIV and other infectious diseases; God wills the end of extreme poverty; and God wills a world without war. But achieving these glorious ends requires our human engagement, not just divine intervention. As we discern where God is leading, and we join in that activity of love and healing, we can both "praise the Lord" and bring health and hope to God's people.

### **To Think About / Discuss:**

Does God understand why some people have difficulty offering praise?

How can I express my praise and love of God?

(This message was originally written for Christian AIDS Bureau of Southern Africa (CABSA), a non-profit organization dependent on funding and donations. Please pray for CABSA and visit [www.cabsa.org.za](http://www.cabsa.org.za) for a comprehensive free Christian HIV resource service.)

### **Worship Litany**

Spirit of the living God, you breathe on all that is fragile and strong, competent and inadequate, broken and whole. You lead us from the places of pain and difficulty to your cool living waters of health and wholeness. Through you every tear is wiped away and we are transformed by your wellsprings of life.

**We praise you, O God, and give you thanks for the gift of life and the life-giving power of your Spirit, which renews and refreshes us with hope.**

We thank you that by the life-giving power of your spirit you bestowed upon us, your people, such gifts as are needed to respond to the situation at hand. Pour on us all that we need to stop AIDS and reach out to everyone affected with compassion, healing and hope.

**May we know your call to be leaders in this struggle and employ the courage, wisdom and resources you have given to respond to HIV and AIDS.**

We pray for the leadership of those living with or affected by HIV and give thanks for the courage you give us to share our stories. We thank you that our stories raise awareness, invite solidarity and challenge us to join with one another in the struggle.

**May we know your call to be leaders in this struggle and employ the courage, wisdom and resources you have given to respond to HIV and AIDS.**

We pray for your church. Be with us and guide us as we respond to the needs of persons living with or affected by HIV and AIDS. We pray especially for our pastors and lay leaders as they provide pastoral services. Inspire and empower them to provide the leadership our faith community needs to respond effectively.

**May we know your call to be leaders in this struggle and employ the courage, wisdom and resources you have given to respond to HIV and AIDS.**

We pray for our public officials. Be with them and guide them in their response to HIV and AIDS. Give them courage, wisdom and resources that they may create effective and just public policies so that everyone may receive the information they need to stop the spread of HIV and everyone may access the treatment and care required for their health and wholeness.

**May we know your call to be leaders in this struggle and employ the courage, wisdom and resources you have given to respond to HIV and AIDS.**

We give you thanks, O God, that you have raised-up leaders throughout the ages - reluctant leaders, courageous leaders, surprising leaders, humble leaders, servant leaders—bestowing on each one gifts for service. Raise-up among us such leaders today who will create universal access to medical treatment and health care, effective education and prevention programs, advocacy for strong and just public policy, and the funds and other resources needed to stop AIDS.

**May we know your call to be leaders in this struggle and employ the courage, wisdom and resources you have given to respond to HIV and AIDS. Amen.**

(Source: A Litany for World AIDS Day 2007 was written by the Rev. Lori Tisher, Intern in the Health and Wholeness Advocacy Ministries of Wider Church Ministries, a Covenanted Ministry of the United Church of Christ.)

**Hymns** "You Are My Hiding Place", *The Faith We Sing*, #2055

"Make Us One", *The Faith We Sing*, #2224

"Gather Us In", *Upper Room Worship Book*, p. 54

"We Shall Overcome", *United Methodist Hymnal*, p. 533

"Be Still My Soul", *United Methodist Hymnal*, p. 534

**Prayers**

**Unison Prayer:** Gracious God, Healer of all, we give you thanks for the life you give us knowing we will certainly face trials and tribulations along the way. But, we are gifted by your love and your grace – to the point that worry flees and sadness turns to joy. Let your lively spirit swirl within our hearts and souls enough to give us the courage to stand strong, to work against stigma against those living with HIV or AIDS and to act boldly so AIDS can, indeed, be history. We remember those who have died due to the AIDS virus knowing their spirits live on. As faithful stewards, we pledge our partnership with you, O Creator, as we share love and peace to all we meet. In the name of the One who created us to live life abundantly with kindness and compassion. Amen.

**Prayer from the Psalms**

"O God, you are our refuge and deliverer.

When we are wounded or ill, you send angels--  
human and divine—to minister to us.

Through Christ we are bound to you in love

Our whole life through.

And, we dwell secure in the shadow of the Most High.

Thanks be to God. Amen (Psalm 91, adapted by Ginger Howl, *Upper Room Worshipbook*, no. 288)

**The Maryknoll AIDS Task Force Prayer**

God of all compassion, comfort people who live with HIV. Spread over us all your quilt of mercy, love and peace.

Open our eyes to your presence reflected in their faces. Open our ears to your truth echoing in their hearts.

Give us the strength to weep with the grieving, to journey with the lonely, to be with the depressed.

May our love mirror your love for those who live in fear, who live under stress and who suffer rejection.

Loving God grant rest to those who have died and hope to all who live with HIV.

God of life, help us to find the cure now and help us to build a world in which no one dies alone and where everyone lives accepted, wanted, and loved.

(Adapted from the Maryknoll sisters of the San Salvador Diocesan HIV/AIDS program and the Ecumenical Advocacy Alliance)

### ***Spirit God Prayer***

Spirit God, you know our needs  
our wounds  
our hurts  
our fears  
even before we can form them  
into words of prayer.

You are patient with us.

You are protective of us.

You are present with us  
until such time that we are able  
to ask for what we need.

Thank you, Spirit God,  
for your healing taking place within  
before we are even aware  
of how broken we have become.

(Source: Written by Susan Gregg-Schroeder, *In the Shadow of God's Wings: Grace in the Midst of Depression*, Nashville, TN: Upper Room Books, 1997, p. 116)

### **Readings from the Sacred Scriptures**

- Mark 1:40-45
- Luke 4:16-21
- John 13:35
- Isaiah 61:1-3

**Reading from the UMC Book of Resolutions** (Resolution #3241, "Covenant to Care: Recognizing and Responding to the Many Faces of AIDS in the U.S.A." 2016)

"Churches and other United Methodist organizations need to continue or begin compassionate ministry with persons living with HIV or AIDS and their loved ones. In terms of prevention education, United Methodist have an opportunity to teach not only the facts about HIV transmission and how to prevent infection but to relate these facts to Christian values. Congregations can do HIV and AIDS prevention education in broader contexts, such as human sexuality and holistic health, as well as addressing societal problems, such as racism, sexism, addiction and poverty."

**Reading:** "We Will Not Keep Silent" (by Walter Brueggemann, 2003 Augsburg Fortress Publishers)

We are people who must sing you,  
For the sake of our very lives.  
You are a God who must be sung by us,  
For the sake of your majesty and honor.  
And so, we thank you,  
For lyrics that push us past our reasons,  
For melodies that break open our givens,  
For cadences that locate us home,  
Beyond all our safe places,  
For tones and tunes that open our lives beyond control  
And our futures beyond despair.

We thank you for the long parade of mothers and fathers  
Who have sung you deep and true;  
We thank you for the good company  
Of artists, poets, musicians, cantors, and instruments  
That sing for us and with us, toward you.  
We are witnesses to your mercy and splendor;  
We will not keep silent...ever again. Amen.