



CABSA



AIDS CANDLELIGHT MEMORIAL SERVICE SUGGESTIONS
20 May 2018: Pentecost Sunday

Theme: Reflecting on the Past, Preparing for the Future

1. Introduction

Today many churches from different denominations all over the world celebrate Pentecost Sunday. A day that signifies the birth of the Church of Jesus Christ and reminds us that God, the Holy Spirit, dwells with us, amongst us and within us.

Pentecost reminds us what the church of Jesus Christ is supposed to be. It is about the Holy Spirit bringing people together as one, in spite of our differences. Regardless of our differences in culture, language, traditions, beliefs and even our different theologies and interpretations of the Bible and the world around us. Regardless of our differences in gender, race, sexual orientation, class and health status, the Holy Spirit brings us together.¹

Today is also AIDS Candlelight Memorial Day. A day where thousands of churches around the world reflect on the presence and impact of HIV and AIDS in our midst. For this day to coincide with Pentecost Sunday, is quite significant as it reminds us that as we are truly church for one another, we should also be church – and therefore a safe place – for those of us who are living with HIV, and those of us who are living with the painful memories and loss of those we have lost to AIDS, those we had to greet much too soon.

The theme for this year's Candlelight Memorial Day is **Reflecting on our past, preparing for our future**. And we would like to invite you and your congregation to reflect with us for a few moments:

2. Candlelight ceremony – Reflecting on the Past

Preparations

Have as many candles as possible – at least 20 in the front of the church. They can be different shapes and sizes or all the same.

You could buy 2 packets of long white candles and cut them smaller and in different sized candles and place them in empty bottles or candle stands.

You could also extend an invitation to your congregations to bring their own candles with them to the church service.

Prearrange before the service with at least two people from your church to participate in the lighting of candles during the candle light ceremony.

They can be members of your HIV action group, members or supporters of the local HIV support group, members who are living openly with their HIV status, church members who work in local clinics or other outreach initiatives in your community.

Ask them to come forward as the liturgist reads the candlelight ceremony or while the video clip is shown. Ask them to slowly light some of the different candles while the text is read or played. Let them light only half of the candles, to leave some for the rest of the congregation to also light after the reading or video.

¹ <https://www.umcdiscipleship.org/worship/lectionary-calendar/day-of-pentecost-2018-year-b>

Invitation

Dear Sisters and Brothers

We would like to invite you as a congregation to take a few moments and reflect with us on our journey with HIV and as we do so you are invited to come forward and also light a candle. You are also welcome to bring your own candles and place it amongst the other candles.

The following text can be read OR you could show a video, download here <https://goo.gl/gvik2y>

Text for Video 1

Today we light candles in memory of the millions of people who have already died from AIDS related illnesses.

We light candles for the estimated 300 people who die of AIDS in South Africa, EVERY day, including today.

Worldwide an estimated 2700 people die of AIDS – EVERY day.

We light candles for the families and loved ones who will be standing next to those beds, TODAY.

When we light these candles, we recall the names, faces and lives of our own loved ones, our family and friends, neighbours and colleagues who have passed away.

We also light our candles in solidarity with those of us who are living with HIV.

For the millions of us worldwide, but also for ourselves and the people we know by name.

We light our candles for the more than 7 million people in South Africa that are living with HIV and for about 700 more people, who get infected with HIV in South Africa EVERY day, including today.

Worldwide there is an estimated 5000 new infections EVERY day. We also light our candles for every person who recently got infected and who are still coming to terms with this new reality in their lives.²

Let us pray together ...

Dear Almighty God, we turn to you with hearts filled with mixed and conflicting emotions.

We want to thank you for important progress that we have witnessed over the last few years especially when we think of early access to improved medication.

Lord there is much to celebrate, yet, when we light these candles we are also reminded of our own encounters with HIV and our own HIV status.

For some of us HIV has become a manageable chronic disease and we praise your Holy Name for this miracle. Yet, for far too many of us HIV is still a daily life or death struggle for treatment, adequate food, housing, and income, often amidst stigma, discrimination and violence.³

Lord, we turn to you, because where else will we go? We turn to you to guide us and teach us to know what it means to truly be church for one another in the presence of the ongoing HIV epidemic.

² Statistics are processed from www.unaids.org/en/regionscountries/countries/southafrica

³ <https://www.candlelightmemorial.org/news/item/57-candlelight-memorial-2018-reflecting-on-our-past,-preparing-for-our-future-%20.html>

We pray this in your name.

Amen

If you have not invited the congregation yet, you could also extend an invitation to come forward and light more candles after your prayer.

It would be suggested to sing a song or hymn to allow space for more people to bring and light their candles.

3. Revised Common Lectionary Text

Texts suggested by Revised Common Lectionary

Acts 2:1-21

Psalms 104:24-35

Romans 8:22-27

John 14:1-14

If you plan to include references to AIDS Candlelight Memorial in the sermon, the text most suitable to use is **Romans 8:22-27**. (It is also used in the second video clip.)

This text reminds us that the Holy Spirit is with us and intercedes with us and for us when we ourselves do not know what or how to pray.

When we consider the theme, reflecting on the past and preparing for the future, there is comfort knowing that God is also in our future and that we are assisted by the Holy Spirit to pray for, but also plan for a future in which people do not die of AIDS related illnesses anymore and new HIV infections are reduced significantly, a future where all HIV positive people are welcomed and supported in their churches. A future where churches understand their role to create safe spaces where ALL are embraced.

In your preparations, also have a look at the second video clip and decide where the video would work best – as introduction to sermon or as conclusion?

4. Preparing for the Future

The following text can be read OR you can download a video clip here <https://goo.gl/ZimYc2>

We read from Romans 8:22-27 from the New King James Version.

²² For we know that the whole creation groans and labors with birth pangs together until now. ²³ Not only *that*, but we also who have the firstfruits of the Spirit, even we ourselves groan within ourselves, eagerly waiting for the adoption, the redemption of our body. ²⁴ For we were saved in this hope, but hope that is seen is not hope; for why does one still hope for what he sees? ²⁵ But if we hope for what we do not see, we eagerly wait for *it* with perseverance.

²⁶ Likewise the Spirit also helps in our weaknesses. For we do not know what we should pray for as we ought, but the Spirit Himself makes intercession for us^[b] with groanings which cannot be uttered. ²⁷ Now He who searches the hearts knows what the mind of the Spirit *is*, because He makes intercession for the saints according to *the will of God*.⁴

Let us pray:

⁴ <https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Romans+8&version=NKJV>

Dear God

As we look towards the future, the HIV epidemic continues to challenge us

At times it even scares us

Especially if we realize how many people still die every day, and how many people are still getting infected, every day

But when we look towards the future

We are also hopeful

For we know that You are in our future.

And Holy God as a church we commit ourselves to plan for this future

To reach out and work with other churches, organisations and service providers

Lord, We commit to being church for one another

We commit to be a safe space where ALL are welcomed, accepted and supported.

Holy Spirit, when we don't know how, teach us and guide us and help us to hope for and work towards what we do not see yet.

We pray this in your name

Amen

5. Blessing

Romans 15:13 Now may God, the source of hope, fill you with all joy and peace as you believe, so that you may overflow with hope by the power of the Holy Spirit.ⁱ

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CABSA



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ⁱ The Holy Bible: International Standard Version (ISV)