

**A Liturgy for Day of Prayer for People with AIDS
And Other Life-threatening Illnesses
November 12, 2017
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Call to Worship

One: How long, O LORD? Will you forget me forever? How long will you hide your face from me?

**Many: How long must I bear pain in my soul, and have sorrow in my heart all day long?
How long shall my enemy be exalted over me?**

One: Consider and answer me, O LORD my God!
Give light to my eyes, or I will sleep the sleep of death.

**Many: And my enemy will say, “I have prevailed”;
my foes will rejoice because I am shaken.**

**All: But I trust in your steadfast love; my heart shall rejoice in your salvation.
I will sing to the LORD, because you have dealt bountifully with me.**

—from Psalm 13 (NRSV)

OR

One: Love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul,
and with all your mind, and with all your strength.

Many: You shall love your neighbor as yourself.

All: There is no other commandment greater than these.

—from Mark 12:30-31 (NRSV)

Call to Confession

As those who are called to follow God’s commandments and show the love of Christ to all, let us confess our sins before God.

Prayer of Confession

One: God of Compassion, when we fail to see your image imprinted on those
who do not look, act, or believe like us,

Many: Forgive us, O God.

One: When we cast judgments upon those whose shortcomings are more public than our own,

Many: Forgive us, O God.

One: When we allow our discomfort with sickness to be an excuse
to further isolate those who are ill,

Many: Forgive us, O God.

One: When we use shallow clichés to minimize, silence, and disregard
the grief those with AIDS and other life-threatening illnesses experience,

Many: Forgive us, O God.

One: When we feed into the stereotypes of already marginalized people,
allowing our words and actions to create questions
about your never-failing grace and love,

Many: Forgive us, O God.

One: When we confuse healing with cure,

Many: Forgive us, O God.

One: Hear, now, our silent confessions:

(pause for silent confessions)

One: Forgive us, O God.

All: Amen.

Assurance of Pardon

One: Who can condemn us? Only Christ Jesus, who died, who was raised,
who is at the right hand of God, and who indeed intercedes for us.

Hear the good news—through Christ, you are forgiven.

Many: Thanks be to God!

—based on Romans 8:34 (NRSV)

Prayer for Illumination

Draw us close to you, O God. Break down our barriers and preconceived notions so that we may meet your word with ears ready to hear, hearts ready to love, and feet ready to go. May truth be spoken and truth be heard. Amen.

Scripture Possibilities for the Sermon

There are *many* scriptures that testify to God's ability to physically heal. However, for whatever reason, physically healing does not always occur, no matter how many petitions to God are made. People of faith who desire, but are not experiencing, physical healing often feel great shame for feeling angry or bitter toward God about their sickness. Numerous patients and families of patients have shared with me how isolating it is to want healing, pray for healing, and then not be healed. These confessions are almost always followed by apologies for "questioning God" or "being angry with God" or "not being a good Christian because 'good Christians' never have weak moments of faith." My hope is that on this Sunday, which is set apart to pray for people with AIDS and other life threatening illnesses, we are able see God working through the suggested scriptures as we publically name the silent parts of illness—the pain, grief, isolation, shame, anger, etc.—and think theologically about how followers of Christ can love, advocate for, and serve those affected by life threatening illness.

- Psalm 31:1-13
- Psalm 38
- Proverbs 31:8-9
- Isaiah 35

- Isaiah 40:1-11
- Lamentations 3 (in part or in whole)
- Matthew 11:28-30
- Romans 8:18-39
- Colossians 3:12-17

Prayer of Intercession

One: Merciful and caring God, you are present in the midst of our joys and sorrows, our healing and sickness, our calm and anger, our honor and shame. Open our eyes to see your presence in our lives.

Many: Have mercy on us.

One: Be with those who are physically, mentally, and spiritually unwell. Provide those who are sick comfort and peace, access to medicines and health care, and a community of faith who is willing to journey alongside those who are ill.

Many: Have mercy on us.

One: Give us clear vision so that we may recognize those living with HIV and AIDS as children of our beloved. Provide us with strength so that we may act justly in hopes of erasing the social stigma, discrimination, poverty, and violence that so often accompanies a diagnosis of HIV and AIDS.

Many: Have mercy on us.

One: Grant gentleness, kindness, patience, strength, and wisdom to those who offer care to those living with HIV, AIDS, and other threatening illnesses.

Many: Have mercy on us.

One: Meet us with grace, kindness, and love when we find ourselves consumed with feelings of inadequacy, darkness, isolation, shame, and unmovable pressures and circumstances.

Many: Have mercy on us.

One: Encourage, protect, and guide those whom govern, protect, teach, and serve us. Allow your Spirit to direct their leadership, actions, and policies to reflect your kingdom on earth as it is in heaven.

Many: Have mercy on us.

One: Let us, as a community, lift our voices up to a God who cares:

(Speak the names and situations aloud)

One: Good and caring God, we commend all for whom we pray, trusting in your mercy, as we pray together in the manner in which Jesus taught his disciples, 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, and the power, and the glory, forever. Amen.**

Invitation to the Offering

“If I give away all my possessions, and if I hand over my body so that I may boast, but do not have love, I gain nothing.” As we prepare to give of our tithes and offerings, let us also silently reflect on ways to give of ourselves.

—*1 Corinthians 13:3 (NRSV)*

Prayer of Thanksgiving

God, giver of all good gifts, we thank you for the opportunity to give of our funds and ourselves. We ask that you receive now our tithes and offerings. Bless our resources, giving us the discernment to use them wisely, so that we may reflect your glory as we serve your creation. Amen.

Charge and Benediction

Go into the world and share the love of Christ with all whom you encounter. “Speak up for those who cannot speak for themselves, for the rights of all who are destitute. Speak up and judge fairly; defend the rights of the poor and needy” in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. Alleluia and Amen.

—*Proverbs 31:8-9 (NIV)*

OR

“Lead a life worthy of the calling to which you have been called, with all humility and gentleness, with patience, bearing with one another in love, making every effort to maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace” in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. Alleluia and Amen.

—*Ephesians 4:1-3 (NRSV)*