

**A CANDLE LIGHTING SERVICE FOR CHILDREN LIVING WITH HIV/AIDS
IN SUB-SAHARAN AFRICA
PRESBYTERIAN PEACEMAKING PROGRAM
A MINISTRY OF THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY COUNCIL
PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH (U.S.A.)**

This candle-lighting litany is designed to remember the children of Sub-Saharan Africa who are living with HIV/AIDS and to note ways in which the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) is responding. The litany could be used on Presbyterian AIDS Awareness Sunday (second Sunday in October), World AIDS Day (December 1), or an appropriate day in the life of your congregation. For more information about the children of Sub-Saharan Africa, order Africa's Children: A Church Response to Children's Issues in Sub-Saharan Africa. Call (800) 524-2612 and ask for PDS# 25384-07-003 to order this free resource (shipping & handling costs apply) or download it from www.pcusa.org/aids-international.

LIGHT THE CANDLE

Use the following litany as the candle is lit.

- Child: Dear Lord, be good to me. The sea is so wide and my boat is so small.
- Adult 1: Hear these words of Isaiah about the New Creation: "For I am about to create new heavens and a new earth; the former things shall not be remembered or come to mind ... No more shall there be in it an infant that lives but a few days, or an old person who does not live out a lifetime."
■ Isaiah 65:17, 20a NRSV
- Adult 2: I invite you to pray with me.
God of compassion, we pray for infants who live but a few days and for children who spend their growing years without the nurture of loving parents. Forgive us when we squander the resources that would buy effective medications for those in Sub-Saharan Africa. Grant us the will to see that justice flows down like waters for all children who still await safety, security, and healthy lives.
- People: Help us to be a safe harbor for children. Amen.

A STATEMENT OF THE SITUATION

One of the most tragic consequences of the HIV/AIDS epidemic in sub-Saharan Africa is the increasing number of vulnerable children. Millions of children have been affected by the loss of one or both parents as a result of AIDS. HIV/AIDS has added to the myriad of obstacles to overcoming chronic poverty at household, community, and national levels. The impact of AIDS on children continues to grow in many countries. UNICEF notes, "Children under age 15 account for 1 in 6 AIDS-related deaths worldwide and 1 in 7 new HIV infections." The vast majority of children are infected through mother-to-child transmission. Preventing transmission of HIV from mothers to children and keeping mothers free from HIV/AIDS is paramount. Without treatment, 50 percent of infected infants will die before age 2.

THE CHURCH RESPONDS: AN EXAMPLE FROM THE DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC OF THE CONGO

Governments, churches, communities, and other organizations are working to care for those affected by the HIV/AIDS pandemic. The Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) and its partners are among them. The Presbyterian Church of Kinshasa is one of our partners in the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

The Presbyterian Woman and Family Department of the church has been feeding and caring for orphaned and abandoned children for many years due to the economic, political, and social crisis that has engulfed the country, especially since the wars of 1996 and 1998. During the wars, the rape of young girls and

women led to an increase in the number of people infected with HIV and AIDS. As a result, there are many AIDS orphans in addition to the orphans of war. Recently, the Presbyterian Health Department and the Presbyterian Woman and Family Department of the Presbyterian Church of Kinshasa partnered together to address the needs of the growing number of abandoned children and AIDS orphans.

There are seven feeding centers, each connected to a local health center. The primary health needs of 500 orphaned children are served at these centers. Three times a week the children are provided with a nutritious meal. On alternate days they are provided with maize to take home. The children are taught Bible stories and songs about Jesus Christ. School fees and uniforms are provided for some of the children.

The program has a multidisciplinary approach to working with the AIDS orphans and their caretakers. The feeding program promotes the use of Moringa leaf powder in children's food and cookies because of its positive effects on malnutrition. Medical and educational needs of the children are addressed. Families caring for the orphans are assisted in starting or improving home gardens for better nutrition and generation of income. Once children meet the health standards, they leave the program and other children enter.

PRAY FOR THE CHILDREN

Tell the participants that a common greeting among the Masai people of East Africa is "And how are the children?" Invite them to join you in prayer. Note that their response will be: "Make us your healing hands for the children, O God."

One: Loving God, you have called us to be a healing presence in a hurting world.

All: Make us your healing hands for the children, O God.

One: In Malawi and Mozambique and Mauritius, in Zambia and Zimbabwe,

All: Make us your healing hands for the children, O God.

One: In the Democratic Republic of the Congo and Equatorial Guinea, in Lesotho and Kenya and Uganda,

All: Make us your healing hands for the children, O God.

One: In Ghana and Liberia and Sierra Leone, in the Republic of South Africa and Angola,

All: Make us your healing hands for the children, O God.

One: In Cameroon and Niger and Rwanda, in Sudan and Madagascar and Ethiopia,

All: Make us your healing hands for the children, O God.

One: Loving God, when we ask, "And how are the children?" we know that the children are not well.

All: Make us your healing hands for the children, O God. Amen.

Visit www.pcusa.org/aids-international for information on how the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) is responding to AIDS worldwide.



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