

Church Liturgy: World-Aids-Day 2011

The first of December is known as World Aids Day. For this year members of the United Evangelical Mission (UEM) from three continents developed a liturgy. The liturgy is available in German, English, French and Bahasa Indonesia. It shall be celebrated on the 1st of December or on the 4th of December.

Silence

As music quietly plays. Four candles placed in a circle are lit. The fifth candle, the Central candle, remains unlit.

Introduction

S1: 70 thousand people in Germany live with HIV Aids. In the whole world there are 33 million. The number of new infections is still rising.

S2: New medication has improved the quality of life of many people living with HIV/Aids. But still HIV/Aids cannot be cured. Infected people still live with the risk of strong side effects, and the danger of discrimination and poverty.

S3: Since the beginning of the epidemic most of the infections were found in developing countries. The rate of infections in South- and East Asia is twice as high as in all industrial countries altogether. The vulnerability of women and girls is very high. 80 Percent of all women living with HIV/Aids live in the region of the Sub-Sahara.

S4: People living with HIV/Aids are often victims of discrimination and violence. In China 30 percent of the infected people endure abuses and insults. People lose their working place and the consequence is that they also lose their access to medical care. Still many children are born with the HIV/Aids virus.

S5: In remembrance of all infected children, youth, men and women, and their families as well as in the hope of Gods presence in our midst let us begin this service with happy hearts: in the name of the father, the son and the holy spirit Amen.

Song: My soul does magnify the Lord (TM 262)

Meditation

While the Church remains silent in the face of such suffering in this world, the candles of hope are extinguished.

(The four candles are extinguished.)

Lament of the people

S1: Stories of pain and suffering abound. Lives and spirits are crushed. The voices of the children are heard crying in the land.

S2: A sound is heard in Ramah, the sound of bitter weeping. Rachel is crying for her children; she refuses to be comforted, for they are dead. (Mt 2, 18)

S1: Is there no one who can help us? Is there no one who will care? Are we to be alone and desolate – desperate in our agony? Will no one hear and come?

S2: God said: „I will send my messenger ahead of you to open the way for you.” Someone is shouting in the desert, „get the road ready for the Lord; and make a straight path for him to travel!”

Song: There is a longing in our hearts

R There is a longing in our hearts, o Lord, for you to re-
 Da wohnt ein Sehnen tief in uns, o Gott, nach dir, dich zu
 veal your- self to us. There is a longing in our hearts for
 sehn, dir nah zu sein. Es ist ein Sehnen, ist ein Durst nach
 love we on- ly find in you, our God. *Fine* 1. For jus- tice,
 Glück, nach Lie- be, wie nur du sie gibst. 1. Um Frie- den,
 for freedom, for mer- cy, hear our prayer. In
 um Frei- heit, um Hoffnung bit- ten wir. In
 sor- row, in grief: be near, hear our prayer, o God. *D.C.*
 Sor- ge, im Schmerz – sei da, sei uns na - he, Gott.

2. For wisdom, for courage, for comfort: hear our prayer.
 In weakness, in fear: be near, hear our prayer, O God.
3. For healing, for wholeness, for new life: hear our prayer.
 In sickness, in death: be near, hear our prayer, O God.
4. Lord save us, take pity, light in our darkness.
 We call you, we wait: be near, hear our prayer, O God.

Meditation

L: Jesus came into the world as a light in the darkness.

G: And the darkness could not put it out.

L: He entered into the lives of the people and became one with them, their joys, their pain and their sorrows.

G: We walk in the footsteps and follow in his way.

L: Through his death and his resurrection, He entered into the world.

G: Thanks and praise to Creator God!

L: The flame of Hope continues to burn in the darkness; bringing Hope into scenes of decay and despair, lives of pain and agony.

G: May his glow enter the hearts of the children caught within this suffering.

L: It is the task of the community of faith to keep the flame burning, sending forth its light of Hope into all of life. If we do not fulfil this task, our silence will be heard.

G: Fill us, loving God, fill us with your spirit.

Silence

As the Christ candle, the Candle of Hope, standing in the middle of the other candles is lit.

Song

Bible Readings

John 5: 1-9; Marc: 5: 25-34; Luke 5, 17-26

Some ideas for the sermon/meditation

Joh 5, 1-9 Jesus is heals the man in Bethzatha

1. Jesus asks the man "Do you want to be made well? "

- The World Health Organisation defines health as follows: „Health is a state of complete physical, mental and social well-being and not merely the absence of disease or infirmity.“ Health is more than the absence of illness and physical pain. Social integration also contributes to health. Physical pain can be treated by medication, but the infection cannot be cured at the moment.
- All Christians regardless of their profession can help to cure HIV-infected people by helping to integrate them. So that at least the need of social contacts is met. On the 1st of December we as Christians are reminded to stand in solidarity with the infected.

2. I have no one“

- The story shows how important solidarity is. The invalid person in the story says to Jesus: „Sir, I have no one to put me into the pool when the water is stirred up“. The invalid needed a person bringing him to the water. Many HIV infected people are desperate and need other people in different ways: In countries of the south people need more information. In remote areas they do not know where to go for testing or for medical care. Also money is missing to travel to places where help is given.
- Christians have to assume responsibility for these people. They should say: "We care for you. We are there for you." But not only people in the churches have to say that but also politicians have to act in a responsible way. They have to unfold how they use the money of the International Aids foundation. They have to guarantee that the money will be used in an adequate way for the people living with HIV/Aids.

3. Jesus heals

- Solidarity with the infected is one way in which the church can heal people – at least to integrate them in the church community.

Mk 5, 25-34: The woman suffering from haemorrhages

1. Blood

- The woman in the story is bleeding since 12 years. She is weak. Many people living with HIV/Aids are also weak.

2. Anonymity because of fear of social exclusion

- The woman approaches Jesus, touches his clothes, but stays anonymous in the group. Surely she is afraid to talk about her illness in public. Because at that time a bleeding women was classified as impure. She would not be allowed to enter the temple. The mass would avoid her if they knew about her suffering. Many HIV/Aids infected are afraid to speak about their infections and their illness in public. The fear of discrimination is too big.
- From time to time stories are heard, that people lose their jobs after they told in public that they are infected. In many countries that is a big problem, because they do not have a health insurance when they do not have a job. They cannot pay the rent for their housing, friends turn away from them, because they are afraid of getting infected by the former friend. Or the infected person is seen as a burden. Those are many reasons why people prefer not to speak in public of their infection. They stay anonymous in the crowd like the woman in the story.

3. Jesus wants encounter

- Jesus does not want anonymity. Jesus wants to know who we are. He does not only want to see a crowd but he want to know each one of us – one by one. Jesus perceives that someone touched his garment. He feels that he has lost power. He turns around, but only sees the crowd. So he asks: "Who touched my clothes?" The disciples do not know. The woman becomes afraid. She is afraid to step forward, to leave her anonymity behind. It costs her quite an effort not to stay in the crowd and to become visible. But Jesus wants to meet her.
- In the end it is the decision of the woman herself to be seen by Jesus. She falls down on her knees before him. So that he could see her. She is not part of the anonymous crowd anymore. The woman is recognized by Jesus. Interaction and encounter of people is characterized by mutual giving and receiving. To meet each other, to recognize the other needs openness and communication, even courage. Christians

should help to improve communication processes, so that even in churches there are less topics which are taboo to talk about such as sexuality, condoms. But Christians should not only talk but also act.

Lk 5: 17-26: The healing of the paralysed man

1. Friends who help

- The paralysed man only could be cured because he had friends who carried him. Without his friends, the man never would have gotten the chance to come to Jesus. People often hesitate to come to Jesus. There are always people who make fun of Christians or who block the way to Jesus. The friends cannot easily find a way to Jesus. The crowd does not consider the paralysed man. Everybody in the crowd only thinks of herself or himself. As usual in many societies they do not care about the sick and weak people. But the friends do not lose sight. They find other ways and succeed. Jesus heals their friend.

2. „Friend, your sins are forgiven you“

- From time to time this verse is misunderstood. Jesus does *not* say: Because you are a sinner, you got sick!“ Often this false causal coherence is referred to. Jesus does not call the paralysed man by his name but refers to him in general. Sin is not the failure of one person. It is the structure – the crowd who does not care. The house which does not have enough room for everybody.
- It is presumptuous if Christians say that a person is infected because Gods wants to punish him or her. We should not blame or judge. We should turn towards the other in love. Reading the story of the blind man in the gospel of John Jesus is not asking whom to blame for the blindness. That is not important. Important is what each one of us can do to help each other.
- But we should not only care for people who are already infected. We also should think about prevention. The aim is zero new infections. Churches have to open up themselves to speak about sexual ethics. The message of abstinence might not be suitable for today’s way of living. Sexuality should be seen as a gift of God, which can not be bought or offered for money. The gift is mutual to man and women. Man and women should live it in a responsible way of loving.

Song

Creed (from Indonesia)

I believe in God, who is love, and who gave the earth to all people.

I believe in Jesus Christ, who came to heal us from all forms of oppression

I believe in the Holy Spirit, who is working through people, who turn to the truth.

I believe in the communion of the faithful, which is called to serve all people.

I do not believe in the survival of the fittest, neither in the power of weapons nor in the power of oppression.

I believe in human rights, solidarity with all people, in the power of nonviolence.

I believe that all men and women are equal, that an order building on violence and injustice is no order.

I do not believe, that all suffering has to be in vein that death is the end, that the distortion of the world is in Gods mind.

I dare – always and despite all this – to believe in Gods transforming and transfiguring power. I believe in the promise of the new heaven and the new earth, where righteousness and peace will bloom. Amen.

Song

Intercession

Four people (maybe from the youth) come in front and pray:

S1: For the children in the world...

All: Oh Lord, hear my prayer

S2. For people living with HIV/Aids...

All: Oh lord hear my prayer

S3. For the society, that we love and accept each other... .

All: Oh Lord, hear my prayer

S4. For all people, who are dedicated and work against discrimination

All: O Lord hear my prayer

Hope

S1: Children are our dreams, our future, When they suffer, are in pain, are no more, then we suffer, are in pain, are no more.

G: We hear their cries, and their tears are our tears.

S2: Advent is time of Hope. We celebrate again the coming of the Messiah into our grief stricken world. It is a Hope that is to be shared as he shared his life. It is a Hope, which has to be shared as the bread and wine at the Lord´s Supper is shared.

C: May we be as bread broken, as wine poured out.

S1: But sometimes our ears are deaf, our eyes are blind and we prefer to hide from truth, from facts and figures and stories that tell of human suffering... Particularly, the pain, the suffering of children.

C: Forgive us our hardness of hearing and create a clean heart in us, O God.

S2 The flame of Hope burns brightly in our midst calling us to be Bearers of Hope, to those who suffer, to those who are the outcasts in today's world.

C: We answer the call and in response we relight the Four Candles symbolizing: Our confessing - to follow truly the way of Jesus.

Silence

Our compassion - for those who suffer (candle 1 is lit)

Silence

Our intellect - to be watchful and benevolent (candle 2 is lit)

Silence

Our commitment - to the children of our world. (candle 3 is lit)

Silence

Our courage - to be Bearers of Hope (candle 4 is lit)

S3: Become bearers of Hope

(Everybody lights a small candle on the candle of Hope. The small candles are laid on the ground in the form of an Aids-Ribbon)

Song

Sending

C: We are bearers of Hope.

We entrust ourselves, our words and our actions to Immanuel God-with-us.

May the hope of this Advent season which proclaims the coming of the babe in Bethlehem be the beginning of Hope for the children.

May we help to make it so.

Our father

Blessing

Music

(Parts of the liturgy are from Sinfonia Oecumenica, Gütersloh, 2004, 536-544)