You will need:
– ½ bucket of soil
– ½ bucket of water
– 1 large plastic sheet or a large (preferably transparent) bucket
– Your own mobile in your pocket – and a willing volunteer to call it at the correct time
– Clean water, soap and towels or the clean up

Tip the soil onto the sheet (or into the clear bucket) in full view of everyone, getting your hands dirty as you move it around. While you are doing this explain the purpose of tonight’s service; to draw people’s attention to the global issue of HIV and AIDS as well as our current potential for doing something about it. You might like to use the following statistics as you speak:

– 33.2 million people are living with HIV around the globe.
– Of these, 22.5 million live in Sub-Saharan Africa. Most of these are forced to juggle HIV and poverty.
– In Sub-Saharan Africa there are 13 million AIDS orphans.
– In Mozambique, in East Africa, 85 per cent of people requiring life-saving ARV medicines do not have access to them.
– ARV medicines are not a cure for AIDS, but they delay the effects of AIDS – by up to 35 years, according to recent research. A study has found that a 25-year-old whose life expectancy was otherwise 76 years would, if diagnosed with HIV and treated with ARVs, expect to reach 64, assuming they have a nutritious diet and proper care. [source: Danish study published in Annals of Internal Medicine.]

Your World AIDS Day evening service is about helping your church join many others across the UK and the globe in praying for people living with HIV. And, its about giving them the chance to act: before the service place a Giving leaflet (one pack enclosed and more available by phoning Tearfund on 0845 355 8355) on each person’s seat.

Soil for starters

You will need:
– ½ bucket of soil
– ½ bucket of water
– 1 large plastic sheet or a large (preferably transparent) bucket
– Your own mobile in your pocket – and a willing volunteer to call it at the correct time
– Clean water, soap and towels or the clean up

Add the water to the mud while you go through these stats. Again, get your hands in and ensure they are well and truly filthy.

Depending on the level of Congregational participation that people are comfortable with, you can keep this as an activity solely demonstrated by yourself or include others – or even everyone.

Now is the time to have someone discreetly dial your phone – which you will ideally have set to ring nice and loud. Feign embarrassment and awkwardness as you either try to get your phone out of your pocket yourself or ask someone to help you.

Wash your hands and make the link between the ways in which something as insignificant as a pair of dirty hands can leave us tied up and struggling with even the most basic of tasks.

Explain that today is World AIDS Day. Tonight’s service is about breaking the silence about HIV and asking what we can do to bring down the kind of barriers that prevent people who are trapped by poverty from accessing life-saving ARV medicines.

It’s about the small steps we can each take to clean off our own hands and join the army of good people, some of whom feature in the new Tearfund film...

Film

Show the 10-minute Alive film, from the Alive DVD. This introduces two mothers, Berta, 28, and Belinha, 37, and tells the moving story of their own battle to stay alive – and of the vital role of the local church in helping them win this battle.

Bible reading

Read Isaiah 58 the passage aloud and – if possible – really go to town on the language, reading it with plenty of passion and feeling.
Worship

Move on to worship through song. Follow what normal steps you take, but make sure that you play the Alive worship film, which includes a backing track, Everlasting Arms, by Al Gordon. This is found on the Alive DVD.

Other worship songs you might like to use or sing: God of Justice – Tim Hughes / You Have Shown Us – CompassionArt / How Long? – Al Gordon / Mission’s Flame – Matt Redman / As Jesus Walked – Martyn Layzell / Whole World in His Hands – Tim Hughes.

Prayer & action

Explain that World AIDS day is about what we do. And as followers of an activist messiah, we’re going to combine out praying and our acting / responding.

Invite people to pick up the Giving leaflet on their chairs and look through it. For background while they do this, play the Everlasting Arms video from the Alive DVD.

Give space for people who wish to respond using the leaflet to do so. Those who don’t wish to can view the worship DVD.

Now pray. Get the bucket of mud out again: people may wish to handle this as they pray.

Remind people that you are joining with thousands of other Christians around the country during this service.

The chances are that a discussion will flow out of the feedback, and clearly there will be a range of opinion. Your job is to help people get heard, to bust any myths and help steer people towards an understanding of these central truths that we see so clearly throughout Isaiah 58 – as well as the rest of scripture; that God’s followers have a responsibility to care for those who are trapped by poverty and injustice, and that our potential to impact the world around us underwritten by the power of the Almighty God we serve.

Sermon

There are two options here; you can either use the pre-prepared sermon notes written by Revd Hugh Osgood, found below, or use this alternative idea:

Divide people into small groups of three or four. Each one is going to have to work together to produce an outline for a sermon on one of the following topics:

– The Bible suggests that Christians are absolved of all responsibility when it comes to the well-being of others

– Scripture tells us that we must care about how others are treated and that their well-being is our responsibility

– God’s omnipotence (power) means that we can do nothing to influence this world

– Our potential for changing the world around us is great – the Bible makes it clear

– Health and physical well-being are of secondary importance to eternal salvation

– God cares for the whole person, and calls for us to do likewise

Give your groups 15 minutes to come up with their outline. Encourage them to reference scripture and pull together as good an argument as they can – even if they do not necessarily agree with it themselves.

When all have finished gather people round for some feedback. Give each group two minutes to present their summarised arguments.

If you have more than one group working on the same outline you might want to split the groups up – but joining together as a congregation will allow for a fuller discussion (and will make it easier for those people to hide that want to!).
Either use the written prayers, found on pages 9-10, or base your prayers around the following points:

– Remember the millions who have already died from AIDS-related illnesses. Pray too for the 13 million AIDS orphans in sub-Saharan Africa alone.

– Remember the 33 million people around the world living with HIV today.

– Pray for Mozambique; a country where average incomes are as low as 50p per day, life expectancy is 42 and where HIV prevalence runs at 19 per cent, or one-in-five. The local church is starting to make a significant impact on those living with HIV – helping them to access life-saving ARV medicines and supporting them as they rebuild their lives.

– Pray for Berta, Belinha and all the church volunteers in Mozambique. Pray for their health.

– Remember the church in the UK. Our potential to fight HIV and AIDS is immense. By supporting local churches and volunteers as they in turn support those living with HIV, we can be a part of a dramatic reversal of fortune. We truly can be the ‘hope of the world’ if we use our resources well.

Prayer options

You can use the written prayers, found on pages 9-10, or base your prayers around the following points:

– Remember the millions who have already died from AIDS-related illnesses. Pray too for the 13 million AIDS orphans in sub-Saharan Africa alone.

– Remember the 33 million people around the world living with HIV today.

– Pray for Mozambique; a country where average incomes are as low as 50p per day, life expectancy is 42 and where HIV prevalence runs at 19 per cent, or one-in-five. The local church is starting to make a significant impact on those living with HIV – helping them to access life-saving ARV medicines and supporting them as they rebuild their lives.

– Pray for Berta, Belinha and all the church volunteers in Mozambique. Pray for their health.

– Remember the church in the UK. Our potential to fight HIV and AIDS is immense. By supporting local churches and volunteers as they in turn support those living with HIV, we can be a part of a dramatic reversal of fortune. We truly can be the ‘hope of the world’ if we use our resources well.

But we believe in the call to, and the power of, God’s church as a bringer of hope.

We know God’s church must work as one global, agile movement.

We, God’s church, must infect communities with hope, infuse darkness with light, ease suffering with medicines, reverse injustice with advocacy.

We believe and respond to this call – to what your Spirit in us confirms.

We believe that like Christ, victory will come through service, not honour, as the global church is united for action.

And we commit to pray passionately, act intentionally, give generously, campaign forcefully, speak lovingly and think globally – not as ‘me’ but as ‘we’. Not only as ‘local church’ but as Christ’s ‘global church’.

Want to pray some more? Visit www.tearfund.org/prayer and explore our prayer resources, including our Global Day of Prayer.

The HIV creed

You can use the Tearfund HIV creed, below. Read it out or display it on PowerPoint / OHP and say it together as you conclude your prayers.

You may wish to give copies out for people to take away.

Viral church

We believe that our Messiah is an activist.

We know his Spirit never slumbers.

We know he is here, and everywhere, stirring, prompting, convicting: turning belief into action.

We know that belief walks hand in hand with action.

And we know that the oppressed, vulnerable and weak filled the mind of the Messiah.

And so we will keep our focus on them.

We know that people are living with and dying because of HIV.

Action

End by handing out one of the campaigns postcards included with the pack to each person – more can be ordered for free by phoning Tearfund on 0845 355 8355. It’s a small step, but encourage people to sign up here and now.

You can also order a free display stand for people to browse. This provides easily accessible information on HIV. Call 0845 355 8355 to order your display stand pack.

Remember: our responsibility is great, so too is our potential.
Overflowing with Hope

Sermon outline by Rev Dr Hugh Osgood, Founder and President of Churches in Communities International, a network of 6,000 churches in Africa, Asia and Europe.

Reading: Romans 15:1-7, 13

Introduction

On a day when we are considering one of the world’s greatest challenges, Paul’s words in Romans 15:13 help us to focus on the power of hope. He shows us...

where hope comes from,
how it can be worked into us and
how it can work out from us.

But let us think first about the paralysis that comes from hopelessness. When the HIV AIDS threat first became public knowledge, it ushered in what for many was a sense of hopelessness. This feeling spread way beyond the individuals and families battling with the condition. There were people everywhere who felt overwhelmed. It took determination to stir people to practical action. Today there are signs of hope which can mobilise us all.

God, the source of hope

In Romans 15:13 Paul boldly identifies God as the God of hope. In a world that too readily sees God as remote, we are reminded that God’s mission is to bring hope into the hearts and lives of those who otherwise would be overwhelmed with discouragement.

God as light shines in the darkness. Illustrate from Tearfund material and expand from 1 John 1:5 and John 1:5 as appropriate.

God as life confronts death. Illustrate from Tearfund material and expand from 2 Timothy 1:8-10 and John 1:4 as appropriate.

God as love confronts fear and isolation. Illustrate from Tearfund material and expand from 1 John 4:8,11 and 18 as appropriate.

Hope worked into us

As Paul develops Romans 15:13, we realise that God’s hope is not abstract but it is something He can work into our lives. Paul speaks of joy, peace and believing. As with light, life and love, each has its impact.

Joy is not whistling in the dark to raise our spirits. That is superficial and can produce false hope. The joy of others (Illustrate from the Tearfund material) should inspire us. God wants to fill us with joy. Expand from John 15:11, John 17:13 and 1 Peter 1:8 as appropriate.

Peace is not complacency. Peace and activism can go hand in hand. (Illustrate activism from Tearfund partners profiled in the material). Expand from John 14:27 and Col 3:15a as appropriate.

Our believing is the conduit through which joy and peace can flow into our hearts. Joy and peace should be our constant companions in our walk of faith. Stirrings of faith can lead to growing faith (Illustrate from Tearfund material). Expand Romans 1:16,17 as appropriate.

Hope working out from us

God wants to work so much hope into us (through His infusion of joy, peace and faith) that hope then flows out from us... bringing hope, joy, peace and faith to others. Paul indicates, in concluding Romans 15:13 that such an overflowing of hope will be through the power of the Holy Spirit.

It takes the power of the Holy Spirit to bring hope in the face of hopelessness. In our own hearts, over and over again the Holy Spirit has to produce an attitude transformation. Hope, joy, peace and faith need constantly renewing within us.

But the Holy Spirit is interested in more than just an attitude transformation. For hope to overflow effectively there has to be an action transformation.

God changes our attitudes and dispositions so that we can change the circumstances and life opportunities of others.

This is overflowing hope.
Prayers for Tearfund’s HIV Sunday

Church prayers

A prayer for those living with HIV

Father God,

Thank you for the courage and persistence that you give to so many who are facing the challenge of HIV. Thank you for the strength and grace you supply to those who are stigmatised by people who are quick to judge but slow to appreciate the complexities of the condition. Thank you for the love and support of family members and friends who often make personal sacrifices to ease the burdens that HIV can bring. Thank you too for the wisdom and scientific discoveries that are now transforming the prospects of so many.

Lord, we pray that you will reach beyond the reach of man. Minister to those who are yet to be identified, diagnosed and treated and, where treatment has begun, bring a positive outcome to all that is being done.

We ask this in Jesus’ name, amen.

A prayer for Tearfund partners serving communities affected by HIV

God of compassion, who raises up faithful men and women to serve you, we thank you for inspiring those engaged in Tearfund’s partnership projects set up to meet the challenge of HIV AIDS. Thank you for the volunteers and project co-ordinators. Thank you for the inspirational leaders and professional workers. Thank you for the Tearfund field staff supporting close at hand, and for the office staff supporting from behind the scenes.

Father, we ask you to provide wisdom and strength on a daily basis so that each of these projects may grow in influence and transform yet more and more lives through the power of the Holy Spirit.

In Jesus’ name we pray, amen.

A prayer for ourselves as we meet the needs

Lord of our lives, we come before you with open hearts. We thank you for every prompting of your Spirit that challenges us to be more effective in serving you. We thank you for the grace you give us so that we may respond, and for the resources you have entrusted to us so that we can be effective in building your kingdom. We pray that you may speak to us afresh in the face of today’s challenges so we can be active partners in meeting this world’s needs and bringing your comfort, empowerment and breakthrough into the hearts and lives of all who suffer.

Lord, let us not be hearers of your word only, but doers of your word who truly make a difference.

And this we ask in Jesus’ name, amen.

A prayer for scientific breakthrough

God of creation, who saw all you made and acknowledged it to be good, we pray that as we live in this fallen world, which still shows so many signs of your amazing perfection we shall continue to look to you for the answers to the challenges of every continent. Inspire those who search for remedies in the face of a multitude of diseases. Give those who research and those who manufacture the insight and compassion that go beyond company prestige and corporate gain. Take away the inconsistencies in treatment that mean the rich are restored while the poor die. Open fresh avenues for progress, even as we long for the day in which your perfection will be restored.

In Jesus’ name, amen.