

CANDLELIGHT VIGIL MAY 17, 2009



May 17, 2009 is a day when thousands of people in more than 115 countries will gather to light candles and remember those living with AIDS. Be one of them.

iEmbraceAIDS.com is encouraging you to join the Candlelight Memorial (www.candlelightmemorial.org) by holding a candlelight vigil in your own church, school, or community. This would be a great way to show your solidarity with the 33 million people around the world who are living with AIDS. It is also a great awareness raiser.

WHAT YOU'LL NEED:

- A team of coordinators
- A location (perhaps a public space so others notice)
- Candles, matches, and candle-holders
- Posters/flyers to advertise your event
- People to participate

I EMBRACE AIDS &

www.iEmbraceAIDS.com. Order materials at 1-800-333-8300

PLANNING YOUR EVENT:

Activities will form the core of your event. What you do during your vigil depends a lot on what you hope to accomplish during your time. Do you simply want to remember those who've died? Then lighting candles might be enough. Do you also want to educate about HIV and AIDS? In that case, you might want to invite a speaker or have an informational booth. If you want to encourage action, then consider planning an advocacy step that people can do during or after your event. Here are a few things that we'd recommend.

- A) **LIGHT CANDLES**—they will symbolize the lives of those who've died from AIDS and those who are continuing to live with the disease.
- B) **EDUCATE**—set up an information booth and distribute materials about AIDS. CRWRC has some brochures that you can use. You can also order free, glow-in-the-dark bracelets from CRWRC to hand out to everyone who attends.
- C) **PERFORM**—ask others in your school or church to participate by leading songs, performing a skit, reading poems, or whatever else might be appropriate. Be sure to plan these performances in advance so that you know who and what to expect.
- D) **PRESENT AND SPEAK**—invite local leaders, church leaders, HIV/AIDS workers or others to speak about the global AIDS crisis and why it is important to be involved. Speakers can talk about the impact of AIDS in your own community and what can be done to care for those infected, as well as what can be done to prevent the spread of the disease. Speakers can also talk about the global crisis and what you can do to be involved.
- E) **PRAY**—spend some time reflecting on Biblical passages about caring for our neighbors and on God being with us in times of need. Spend some time in prayer confessing the times when we haven't loved our neighbors with AIDS as much as we should have, and pray for God's deliverance and mercy in this time of need around the world.
- F) **GIVE**—hold a freewill offering during your event by passing a collection plate or stationing volunteer collectors around your location. Donate the proceeds to CRWRC's Embrace AIDS Campaign.
- G) **CALL TO ACTION**—End your memorial with a "Call to Action." Motivate and explain to participants different ways that they can take action against AIDS including prayer, financial gifts, volunteer opportunities, and advocacy.

SUGGESTED TIMELINE:

Two months before your event:

- Recruit a team of volunteers. This could be a social justice group at your school or church, a youth group, your students' council, or just a bunch of people who are interested in doing something about AIDS.
- Choose and reserve your location. Identify a place that is central, accessible to many people, and visible to others. A park, common campus area, or church lawn are great suggestions. Once you've identified the location, make sure to request permission from the appropriate people to hold your event there.

- Order support material. You can order brochures about CRWRC's Embrace AIDS campaign and glow-in-the-dark "iEmbraceAIDS" bracelets by calling 1-800-333-8300.
- Recruit speakers, presenters, and performers. Talk with choirs, bands, literary groups, or other people in your church or school to see who might be willing to perform at your event.
- Recruit a volunteer to photograph and/or video tape your event.
- Post your event to iEmbraceAIDS.com to let others know it is coming. If you have trouble accessing the site, feel free to e-mail the details to shine@crwrc.org and we'll post it for you.

One month before:

- Advertise your event—Design and print flyers. Reserve ad space in your school newspaper or church newsletter. Put an announcement in your church bulletin. Post information on your school or church website.
- Buy candles, matches, and holders. You can also make holders by punching a hole in the bottom of clear, disposable glasses.
- Arrange to have tables, chairs, audio-visual equipment and anything else you might need for your event.
- Prepare an outline of events so that you know how the time will be spent during your candlelight vigil. Make sure that all speakers and performers know when they will be needed.

One week before

- Do a last promotional push. This could include talking on your campus radio program, making a personal appeal during a church service or school assembly, hanging new flyers around campus, sending a mass e-mail, etc.
- Send out a press release about your event to local media.

The day of

- Set up your tables, chairs, audio-visual equipment and everything else you need for your event.
- Have volunteers stationed around the event location and at your educational booth to direct people, hand out candles, and talk about AIDS
- Have your volunteer photographer/videographer capture the event, interview attendees, or create light-writing images with those in attendance.
- Start your event on time. Usually a musical performance or speaker is a good way to let people know that the event is beginning.
- Carry out your event according to the outline you prepared. Don't forget to light the candles.
- End the event with a prayer and call to action. If desired, you can have an advocacy activity (like the one suggested at <http://www.e-alliance.ch/en/s/hiv aids/accessmeds/children/>) available at your education table. You can also have volunteers stationed around the event to collect financial donations for CRWRC's Embrace AIDS campaign.
- Post photos or videos from your event at www.iEmbraceAIDS.com