



UNITED CHURCH AIDS/HIV NETWORK

The HIV and AIDS E-communication from the United Church of Christ HIV and AIDS Network (UCAN) –
Office for HIV and AIDS Ministries, Health and Wholeness Advocacy – Wider Church Ministries,
United Church of Christ. www.ucc.org/hiv aids

April 17, 2007

WHAT'S ON MY HEART: JUSTICE NOT JUDGING

Written by Rev. Rose Wright-Scott

What's on my heart when it comes to HIV/AIDS? It's simple and easy to answer because it's justice, not judging, that fills the crevices of my heart. I have been working directly in the field of HIV/AIDS since 1995. I've realized that the time has come to be about justice, to move beyond stigmatization and to be about helping someone find their way when they are diagnosed with HIV and there are no friends or family around. What's on my heart is certainly not that we've arrived, or that I feel like giving up in this struggle. Prevention and education I believe can save a life, and the life it saves may look just like you.

As a local church in central Virginia, where we are is not exempt from this pandemic. I feel that every church and individual alike must get involved. We must all do justice and not judge. At Victory Christian United Church of Christ in Petersburg, VA not only do we hold sessions and support groups, but we've taken our HIV/AIDS program outside the confines of our walls: we've gone into housing developments, we have held sessions at the universities, battered women's shelter, healthcare training facilities and the local jail, (we've even tried to get into some other churches, to no avail). There is not one place that we will not attempt to get into where we may share information, and touch a life. Many times we've found ourselves engaged in one-on-one facilitating.

It's all worth the effort when you see a scared young woman whom I'll call Brenda walk into your office with two small children, no job, low self-worth, going through marriage difficulties, recently lost her mother, her health is moving in the direction of full blown AIDS and she's suffering tremendous guilt from her past lifestyle. Then one day, you don't know exactly when, but after building a rapport

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with her, allowing her to see your genuine concern she begins to trust, and talk with you. Once again medication compliance gets on the top of her list of things to do each day. Follow-up doctor appointments are skipped a lot less. What a joy to look at Brenda 7 years later now holding down a great job, her children are doing well in school, and she is going into local facilities and schools telling her story, and helping others. Her HIV stats are undetectable, her children are not infected and she looks like a picture of health. She's stepped out of the drama of depression and an abusive marriage, and is moving on. Is everything perfect in Brenda's life? No, nevertheless she's found her place in the scope of justice, and she is telling people about Jesus and justice. She's stomping out the judging in her environment, making a difference, having an impact on many sisters and families and I give God praise, for one day that young woman was on my heart, and I reached out and would not stop until her change came. We've all connected with "Brenda's" in our struggle with this work, yet our hearts always have room for one more. **What shall we do?** Help to educate, connect with some other organization in your community, collaborate with a group that's actively in the fight. Learn to love one person at a time, give of your time and resources, and know that it's about Justice not Judging.

Rose Wright-Scott, is an ordained UCC minister. She pastors Victory Christian UCC in Petersburg, VA. She is a Faith Community Project Coordinator for United Church HIV and AIDS Network (UCAN) and the executive director of Sister's Education Awareness Program, and HIV/AIDS educational service. She is also a trained facilitator of the Sista Project, a HIV educational program for African-American women. Rev. Wright-Scott is a preventive case manager, funded through the Central Virginia Consortium. Rev. Wright-Scott serves as the co-chair of Crater HIV and AIDS Educational Services in Petersburg, VA. She is also employed with the Justice and Witness Ministry of the UCC and works out of the Franklinton Center in North Carolina.



God is still speaking,

Staying Alive 07

Quality In Action



August 23–26, 2007

Staying Alive: Positive Leadership Summit:

August 23 – 27, 2007 in Cleveland, OH

“Staying Alive: Positive Leadership Summit” is a unique national conference for all people living with HIV and AIDS, organized specifically by and for people living with HIV and AIDS.

Although focused on the needs of people living with HIV and AIDS, the conference is open to all regardless of HIV status.

Sessions at Staying Alive cover a diverse range of topics of interest to people living with HIV and AIDS, including up-to-date information about treatment and care, organizing for social change, the realities of intimacy and relationships and the challenges of the worldwide AIDS epidemic. Staying Alive also offers the opportunity to meet, network and share experiences with the most diverse national gathering of HIV-positive people, our allies and supporters. For more information, see

www.napwa.org.

Important Dates and Events

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| May 19 | National Asian and Pacific Islander HIV and AIDS Awareness Day
http://www.banyantreeproject.org/hivaids_awareness.html |
| May 20 | International AIDS Candlelight Memorial
http://www.candlelightmemorial.org |
| June 27 | National HIV Testing Day
http://www.hivtest.org |

let it shine
He is a light

UNITED CHURCH
OF CHRIST



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