

### Special points of interest:

- The Cure for HIV
- Young people's stories
- Stories from young people
- UNAIDS, Uniting the World against AIDS

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## The Cure for HIV

There is a cure for HIV, it is called prevention. It isn't that we don't know how to stop HIV from spreading, it's that we aren't getting the information out, or people aren't paying attention, or they're not doing the things that prevent infection. Because, once you know how HIV is transmitted you can then take steps to prevent yourself from getting HIV, or if you are already living with HIV, you can make sure you don't give it to someone else.

Here's what we all need to know about HIV transmission.

1. An HIV positive mother can infect her baby; this can occur during pregnancy, at birth and through breastfeeding.
  2. You can get HIV through unprotected penetrative sex with someone who is infected.
- Abstinence is the only 100% effective way to prevent transmitting HIV sexually.

- When considering penetrative sex, consider the Triple A test: The person must be appropriate, acceptable and available (Triple A) - not wanting to cause you harm!
- If you decide you want to have sex, go with the other person to get an HIV test together and read each other's results. This way you will know what you are about to get into.
- Once you know each other's HIV status and you are still choosing to have penetrative sex, it is still best practice to use a barrier (a condom).
- Incorporate the above for your own protection. If the other person is not willing to join you in this, you need to rethink if they are truly a Triple A person.
- 3. A person can become infected with HIV through injection or transfusion of contaminated blood or blood products, donations of semen (artificial insemination), skin grafts or organ transplants taken from someone who is infected. —



Other examples: If you use contaminated needles to inject steroids, for diabetics or intravenous drug use.

4. HIV can be transmitted by sharing unsterilized injection equipment that has previously been used by someone who is infected. Be extra careful if you get ears pierced, body art (tattoos), or nails done.

## People of Light, Love and Power

Written by Bishop Yvette Flunder

HIV is still among us. We are not without HIV/AIDS prevention education. Messages abound. We are not without positive and affirming churches and faith communities where we can go and receive help and services. How is it that this pandemic continues to thrive? This insidious virus continues to thrive all over the world on fear, denial and shame. Changing this reality is about changing perceptions of self and of others. It is time to remind ourselves that God did not give us a spirit of fear. We are people of Light, Love and Power...We are

- People who are living with HIV/AIDS

- People who have lost loved ones to HIV/AIDS
  - People who are working to prevent HIV/AIDS
  - People working together to create an atmosphere of hope, health and healing
- ONE TRIBE with ONE PURPOSE, embracing a campaign that is focused on taking power from the virus that causes AIDS with the life-giving power of LOVE and fearless AUTHENTICITY

Here is one brother's struggle towards self-affirmation...



### THE RELATIONSHIP

written by Brother Tracy D. Jones

Hello, and how are you?  
I just want to take time out to say something to you, since you and I started out on this journey together  
YOU have keep me from everybody, and I do mean everybody

(Continued on page 7)



Rev. Mike Schuenemeyer  
Executive Director

**“Some say that giving out condoms only encourages young people to have sex. The evidence says that’s not true and our experience is that young people understand that.”**

## Resourcing prevention of the spread of HIV

Written by  
Mike Schuenemeyer

If we want to stop AIDS, we’ve got to work harder at preventing HIV infections. That’s why prevention must be a top priority in our response to the HIV epidemic.

Yes, there has been important progress on treatment and care which has reduced AIDS related deaths, improving the quality and length of life for millions of people living with HIV, but the spread of HIV continues to outpace the capacity to respond. Yes, there have been reductions of infections in some hard hit regions of the world, but the rates of infection have increased in other regions, including North America.

One of the groups most at

risk are young people who are sexually active. UCAN has just developed a new prevention resource for making condoms available to young people. Some say that giving out condoms only encourages young people to have sex. The evidence says that’s not true and our experience is that young people understand that.

Our new resource is ground in *Our Whole Lives* values and encourages abstinence while recognizing and respecting the fact that ultimately young people make their own decisions about whether to become sexually active. It encourages young people to think carefully about this decision by asking themselves a number of important questions before they make the decision to have sex, urging them to

make that decision wisely.

This educational resource also contains basic information about HIV transmission and includes a pocket for male and female condoms and instructions for their proper use.

UCAN’s Faith Community Project is helping faith communities to ramp-up their prevention. We are providing technical assistance to help churches and other organizations develop effective, comprehensive, evidence-based prevention programs. These programs are designed to increase knowledge and awareness of HIV in the congregation and their community, and utilize communication strategies that work with specific groups who are most at risk.

## Rising Above the Stigma, Bonetta’s Story



Bonetta Graves

**M**y name is Bonetta

Graves and am 38 Years old. I have 2 beautiful girls ages 8 and 11. I was diagnosed HIV positive at the age of 21, November 1990 and was tested and made known while attending a Trade School in Laurel, Maryland. One year later I had a near death experience in 1991 where I was hospitalized for 7 days because I could not fight off the flu, along with other complications that the doctors could not diagnose. I have been on

several medications ever since but have maintained my health and in 1998 my HIV status had become undetectable and is still holding that status.

I never was the type of person who really had a fearful conscience or wasn't afraid to do or be whoever it was I wanted to. Until suddenly for the first time at 21 years old back in 1990 as I thought to be making a decent change in my life for the good, finally I sat before a nurse to tell me that I had tested positive for the HIV

virus. It was drastic enough to be told such a thing but I was away from home, away from all my friends and family and was just devastated at least for about the first 3 days. That's when I had decided to call home and tell my mother and she wasn't surprised for she knew how promiscuous I had been. With no counseling or knowledge of how to cope with the situation I continued to go on with my life as if never being told.

After completing 6 months

(Continued on page 3)

## ...Bonetta's Story

(Continued from page 2)  
of Secretarial and Office Skills Management I came back to Virginia where at that time there was limited knowledge and few doctors were excepting HIV/AIDS patients for fear of losing other clients. I didn't share with too many people nor did I admit it to those who asked because I was ashamed and threatened on several occasions by previous partners. I didn't feel comfortable in support groups at that time but did attend two. One was in 1994 at the Red Cross for a couple of months and the other was at Victory Christian UCC through the Sisters Education Awareness (S.E.A.) Program in 2002, where we have been awarded several grants through various organizations to be able to implement program and during the sessions provide food, gift cards and child care and transportation to and from program.

There also was a Women's Program for the Women living with AIDS which **Pastor Rose Wright-Scott** conducts. These HIV ministries were such a blessing and raised my self esteem in such a way that I was able to rise above the stigma of HIV/AIDS. I began to share my testimony in several schools, churches, HIV/AIDS prevention functions and worked with her in implementing the S.E.A. program in several of the low income housing

(community centers), Petersburg Women's Shelter, Petersburg Health Departments/Health fairs, World AIDS Day (Dec. 1) ceremonies providing testing and HIV/AIDS pamphlets and materials. Also we have been going on a monthly basis to Riverside Regional Jail in Prince George, Va. to speak with all women that sign up for the program to teach about prevention of HIV/AIDS.

*"These HIV ministries were such a blessing and raised my self esteem in such a way that I was able to rise above the stigma of HIV/AIDS."*

Within the last 18 years I had been diagnosed as having full blown AIDS and had my second near death experience when it was discovered that I had spinal meningitis and was in the hospital for about 6 days. Even in recovering and coming home my weight would still fluctuate, my skin complexion had changed on several occasions because of medicines, I had lost hair, had skin rashes and couldn't control my bowels at one point. Also I have had to

take up to 20 pills a day. Have had spinal taps, been hospitalized, was out of work for about 4 years straight. Was told I couldn't have children and never expected for anyone to ever care about me again. But God saw fit to have mercy on me and other medicines began to come out that strengthen the immune system and hindered the virus from multiplying and could put my diagnosis in an undetectable status where the virus is so limited it can't be detected. I am fortunate now to be taking only 4 pills a day and have no symptoms or problems of any disease or illness in my body.

My first marriage (children's father) I was married for 11 years after a year of being divorced had a test taken and it was negative and am getting married once again and he is fully aware of the diagnosis and is also not HIV positive. My children at birth had to be tested 3 times within an 18 month period and the tests were all negative. I've been working for several years and living a perfectly normal life health wise. I am truly grateful for my life and health my Heavenly Father has allowed me to regain and maintain!!! I really encourage all to know that there is nothing too hard for God. Everyone is not always fortunate and the medicines don't always work for everybody but I know a GOD that can and will HEAL.



**Rev. Rose Wright-Scott,** Minister for Program Development for the Franklinton Center at Bricks, Whitakers, North Carolina, founder of S.E.A. (Sister's Education Awareness Program) and part of the UCAN Leadership Team.

**GOD is still speaking about HIV and AIDS**



This story and many others are available at:

<http://www.globalministries.org/resources/special-days/aids-day/>



## Working with Children in China, Candy's story

Written by Ms. Xingyuan Zhang (Candy)

During summer vacation, I participated in the children's summer training camp activity as a volunteer. Their story moved me deeply. Volunteering with them helped me understand the children who live on the edge of society and the tenacious will they have. Perhaps on the surface it looked like I was helping them, but in the essence, I knew, they gave to me far more than I gave them. Their spirits showed me that no matter what difficulties we encounter, we should face them optimistically and bravely.

At the same time, each participant helped me understand the significant sufferings by illness the poverty-stricken families of the children experience. I was moved to show loving concern. The work I did made me feel gratified and proud, that I can do something for them. While this work meant I could not spend the summer with my friends, I will never regret it, because, working together with the association's staff, I helped these honorable children. I felt my own soul was filled. Sometimes, in our mind, this work is just a very small matter, but it helps these children be happy for a long time. I like seeing the smiling faces from the bottom of their hearts and their laughter makes the environment seem brighter.

As I worked for the association, it moved me to give and be more. Working

with the children, a sentence or an action often moved me emotionally. For instance, in the summer training camp we gave each child a towel, but two children shared a towel. I asked them why they only used one towel, and they told me, "My mother's towel was rotten and she cannot use it any more, we use one towel and gave the other towel to my mother." Listening to them tell me this, I could not say a word, I did not know how to say my feelings. I was so moved by their action.

Many things happened like

**"From the bottom of our hearts, we offered up our love to them."**

this. I still remember the days I worked with the staff to give the orphaned children living expenses. Each time we visited a family, the child's guardian would cry. For us, it was not a lot of money, but for them it was significant.

Before I worked with the HIV/AIDS association, I always thought their work was very difficult, working no matter if the weather is good or bad. They go to the countryside to



give aid, but also are in contact with so many people who are infected with HIV/AIDS. From the first time I worked with the association's staff and went to the countryside to give the money to the guardians of the orphaned children, I finally understood why the association's staff always does their job with vigor and joy. From the bottom of our hearts, we offered up our love to them. I am grateful to the association's staff and admire them. Compared with them, what I did was a small thing.

We live in a rich environment, shouldn't we lend a hand to help and comfort others? If everyone offered love, the world would become a wonderful world. Maybe now all I can do is make a small contribution, but I will do my best to study hard and hope that I can help the children in the future.

*Ms. Xingyuan Zhang (Candy) is a volunteer who works with Zhecheng Succor (HIV/AIDS) Society, in Henan, China.*

# Take the Lead!



## Spreading awareness, promoting social change; Cherrell's story

Written by Cherrell

**M**y name is Cherrell . I am 22 years old and I am the founder and Executive Director of Collective Care Services Inc. ([www.collectivecareservices.org](http://www.collectivecareservices.org)) which provides services to Black women who suffer from disease and abuse. I was born and raised in Portland Oregon where I attended school through college. I have spent the past 14 years of my life fighting the spread of HIV in my community. My fight against HIV/AIDS began when I realized that the person closest to me, my mother, was at high risk for contracting the virus and dying because she was an injection drug user. My fight against HIV/AIDS grew stronger when I learned that my mother and her friends were sharing needles to inject their drugs. At one time I believed that my battle with HIV/AIDS was over and I had won. I was not able to stop my mother from using drugs or sharing her needles but her health became so poor that she could no longer use drugs. She did not contract HIV, but she passed in the year 2000 with Hepatitis C. In February 2004 I was diagnosed with HIV. I had contracted the virus in 2003

from my boyfriend of 3 years. I contracted the virus the last time I had decided to have unprotected sex with my boyfriend. We practiced safe sex more times than we did unsafe sex but I was in denial that my partner was not honoring our monogamous relationship.

I joined the Young Women of Color Leadership Council because I am committed to educating and empowering women of color about issues of HIV/AIDS, women's rights, and reproductive health. I believe that there are millions of women who feel powerless when it comes to protecting themselves and that they are often required to make decisions without having sufficient education and appropriate resources. The Young Women of Color Leadership Council has provided me with a rare opportunity to network with other women of color who are passionate about the welfare of women of color and are willing to be the voice of many who live unheard and in silence.

I actively serve as an advocate for Black Women, people who are living with HIV and youth. I have worked with MTV Networks and the Oprah



Winfrey Show to raise community awareness of HIV/AIDS internationally. I am a spokesmodel for the National HIV Stops With Me campaign ([www.hivstopswithme.org](http://www.hivstopswithme.org)). I currently serve on the Executive Committee of Oregon's Statewide HIV Prevention Planning Group and Co-Chair Ryan White Title I HIV Planning Council. I have partnered with other community agencies to put on community forums, HIV/AIDS symposiums, and Teen Health Coalitions.

My hopes are to continue to spread awareness of disease and promote social change. My dream is to see unity, health, and prosperity among women of color and their families.

*Cherrell is a member of the Advocates for Youth Young Women of Color Leadership Council.*

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STOP AIDS.

KEEP THE PROMISE.



Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS

**UNAIDS**

UNHCR • UNICEF • WFP • UNDP • UNFPA  
UNODC • ILO • UNESCO • WHO • WORLD BANK

*“HIV is improving in many regions. However, in 2007, the number of new HIV infections was 2.5 times higher than the increase in the number of people receiving anti-retroviral medication.”*

Uniting the World Against AIDS

## UN High Level Meeting on HIV and AIDS

### U.N. Secretary-General issues 'midway' HIV/AIDS report as high-level meeting nears

In preparing a key component for the high-level meeting on AIDS next month, the Secretary-General of the United Nations General Assembly (UNGASS) has compiled its “midway” report regarding progress toward implementing the 2001 Declaration of Commitment on HIV/AIDS and the 2006 Political Declaration on HIV/AIDS.

Findings are based primarily on reports of 147 Member States that represent the most comprehensive body of evidence ever assembled regarding response to HIV in low-, middle- and high-income countries. We lift up the efforts of the Secretary-General's office, which releases this report two years before the target date the world set to achieve universal access to HIV prevention, treatment, care and support; and at the midway mark toward the target date of 2015 for achieving the Millennium Development Goals. The good news is that HIV is improving in many regions. However, in 2007, the number of new HIV infections was 2.5 times higher than the increase in the number of people receiving anti-retroviral medication.

#### Key findings

- As of December 2007, an estimated 33.2 million people worldwide were living with HIV and an estimated 2.5 million were newly infected with HIV/About 2.1 million died of AIDS.
- In 2007, national surveys found in the 15-24 age group, 40 percent of males and 36 percent of females had accurate knowledge of HIV – well below the 95 percent goal unanimously endorsed in the Declaration of Commitment on HIV/AIDS.
- The percentage of HIV-infected pregnant women receiving anti-retrovirals to prevent mother-to-child transmission increased from 14 percent in 2005 to 34 percent in 2007.
- Globally, most injecting drug users and men who have sex with men lack meaningful access to HIV-prevention services.
- More than 80 percent of countries, including 85 percent in sub-Saharan Africa, have policies to ensure equal access for women to HIV prevention, treatment, care and support. Women in sub-Saharan Africa have equal or greater access to anti-retrovirals, but the reverse is true for women in concentrated epidemics.
- Antiretroviral coverage rose by 42 percent in 2007, reaching 3 million people in low-middle-income countries, about 30 percent of those in need.
- In 2007, despite affordable treatments for tuberculosis (TB), only 31 percent of those living with HIV and TB co-infection received both antiretroviral and anti-TB drugs.
- While 74 percent of countries have policies to ensure equal access to HIV-related services for vulnerable groups, 57 percent of these have policies

impeding access to HIV services.

- Funding for HIV-related activities in low- and middle-income countries reached \$10 billion in 2007 — a 12 percent increase over 2006 and a tenfold increase in less than a decade. In low- and lower-middle-income countries, per capita domestic spending on HIV more than doubled between 2005 and 2007.

#### Key recommendations

- Although the great majority of countries have national policies on HIV, budget allocation is often lacking. Senior political leaders must work with donors, technical agencies and civil society to vigorously lead and ensure HIV policy implementation.
- All governments, donors, researchers, non-governmental organizations and other stakeholders engaged in the response to HIV must begin planning for the long term.
- In countries where HIV prevalence exceeds 15 percent, only a national mobilization utilizing every available prevention tool will meet challenges posed by the spread of HIV.
- Scaling up focused HIV-prevention strategies for populations most at risk represents an urgent public health imperative, requiring political courage and leadership.
- Countries should undertake initiatives to improve prevention, diagnosis and treatment of TB in HIV-positive individuals and to diagnose HIV infection in those with TB. Also crucial: a massive political and social mobilization to address gender inequities, sexual norms and their roles in increasing HIV risk and vulnerability.

UCAN will be a civil society participant in the review. The high-level meeting will be held June 10-11 at the United Nations headquarters in New York. Information on the meeting, including the General Secretary's report is online at: <http://www.unaids.org/en/Conferences/2008HLM/default.asp>.

### “Standing Together”

an  
INTERFAITH PRAYER SERVICE TO STOP AIDS

*Please join with people of many faiths  
who will gather for prayer  
on the eve of the  
United Nations Comprehensive Review  
of promises made by world leaders to end AIDS.*

**6:30 PM Monday, June 9th**

**Saint Peter's Church (54th and Lexington)**

United Nations speakers include:

- A message from the UN Secretary General delivered by: Ms. Debbie Landey, Deputy Executive Director of UNAIDS
- Ms. Thoraya Ahmed Obaid, Executive Director of UNFPA

*All are welcome for a reception following the service*

## The Relationship, con'd

*(Continued from page 1)*  
 When this relationship first started,  
 I was not mentioned  
 It was as though I didn't exist  
 I have learned that honest open  
 relationships,  
 for those like you and me, have a  
 very difficult time,  
 Some have lost friends that they've  
 known for years  
 Family won't talk to them anymore  
 And the way some people might  
 look at you  
 treat you, talk to you, disrespect  
 you and ignore you  
 could cause one of us to get lost in  
 this fight  
 Many have even lost their lives  
 This is a very serious relationship  
 OK?  
 People just don't understand and  
 since they don't understand  
 they are very cruel and wicked and  
 even dangerous  
 Some of those who fight us are in  
 the same relationship that we are  
 in

I know you. You fight on. I've seen  
 you go when you don't feel like it  
 I have watched you fight to gain  
 respect for others who live like us  
 I have seen you when you are sick,  
 happy, sad and disappointed  
 I have seen you educate others, go  
 to classes and seminars  
 gaining knowledge about how

important a relationship like this is  
 I see you when you get up, eat  
 your breakfast,  
 come home from work and doc-  
 tor's appointments,  
 struggle to pay bills and keep our  
 house going  
 I've seen you trust God even when  
 your faith is weak

NOW I want you to tell people  
 about ME  
 How I make you feel, how I have  
 pushed you, how I've motivated  
 you  
 since you and I have been together  
 and through all we've been  
 through.

I don't want to be a secret any-  
 more

Tell them how I have increased  
 your faith and given you a heart  
 that cares for all people  
 Yes we have lost weight, gained  
 weight, experienced physical  
 changes...

being stressed makes you look  
 different and it makes you look at  
 life differently

BUT, now it's time  
 Time for you to tell people who I  
 am  
 Time to tell them where I stand in  
 your life

Time for you to acknowledge and  
 respect this relationship  
 The time is now, now is the time

Who is not going anywhere? Me  
 Who will be here until God calls me  
 from you? Me  
 Who sees you every morning? Me  
 Who knows what makes you feel  
 sick or well? Me

Who insists that you take care of  
 yourself? Me  
 Who has been with you at your best  
 and your worst? Me

Tell them about Me  
 Explain things about Me  
 The one who gets you up early! Me  
 The one that is with you when you  
 sleep! Me

ME ME ME ME ME ME ME ME  
 ME AND ME

WHO AM I?  
**HIV**



*NOW I want you  
 to tell people  
 about ME,  
 How I make you  
 feel, how I have  
 pushed you, how  
 I've motivated you  
 since you and I  
 have been together  
 and through all  
 we've been  
 through.  
 I don't want to be  
 a secret anymore.*

## IAC and Ecumenical Pre-Conference

The International AIDS Confer-  
 ence (IAC) will be held Aug. 3-  
 8 in Mexico City. Held every  
 two years, the conference typi-  
 cally draws more than 20,000  
 health workers, scientists, gov-  
 ernment representatives, jour-  
 nalists, activists, corporate  
 leaders, people living with HIV  
 and AIDS, and religious leaders  
 and representatives.

Increased faith-based participa-  
 tion was evident at the XVI  
 International AIDS Conference  
 in 2006 in Toronto, where an  
 Ecumenical Media Team pro-

vided stories, photos, video and  
 audio clips, as well as a daily  
 bulletin on faith-based issues  
 and events.

The Ecumenical Advocacy Alli-  
 ance – a global network of  
 churches and church-related  
 organizations campaigning on  
 HIV and AIDS – collaborates  
 with many partners to spear-  
 head planning for faith-based  
 participation at International  
 AIDS Conferences. EAA con-  
 tinually strives to teach about  
 and contribute to the global  
 response to HIV and AIDS

through sharing experiences  
 and engaging actively in the  
 International AIDS Confer-  
 ences.

The international event will be  
 preceded by an Ecumenical  
 PreConference, which is being  
 coordinated by the EAA.  
 UCAN will be an exhibitor and  
 the Rev. Mike Schuenemeyer,  
 Executive Director, will partici-  
 pate in both the PreConfer-  
 ence and the IAC.



## UCAN

### Faith Community Project Coordinators

Lorraine Allen  
Riverside Church NY

Barbara Baylor  
Minister for Health Care Justice  
Justice and Witness Ministries, UCC

Leonard Conner (Chair)  
City of Refuge UCC—CA

Michael Jones  
Victory UCC Church—GA

Rodney Johnson  
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### Supporting the UCAN Mission

To support our HIV/AIDS  
ministry, gifts can be sent to  
the address above  
marked **UCAN**

Next issue:  
Fall/Winter 2008-09

## UCAN Calendar of Events, 2008

- 2-Apr Panel Presentation and Exhibitor, New York State  
Department of Health Faith Forum, New York, NY
- 10-11-Jun Civil Society Participant, United Nations High Level Meeting  
on HIV and AIDS, New York, NY
- 26-29-Jun Youth and Young Adult Plenary and Exhibitor, One Tribe-  
One Table, The Fellowship and UCC Coalition for LGBT  
Concerns National Gathering, Dallas, TX
- 24-28-Jul Workshop and Exhibitor, UCC National Youth Event,  
Knoxville, TN
- 29-Jul—8-Aug International AIDS Conference and Ecumenical Pre-  
Conference, Mexico City, Mexico
- 16-18 Nov Participant, Evaluation HIV and AIDS Program, Ecumenical  
Advocacy Alliance, Rome, Italy
- 1-Dec TBA, World AIDS Day Events



**SUBSCRIBE to**  
**UCAN Stop AIDS E-News**  
**and JOIN the**  
**Justice Peace Action Network (JPAN)**  
**at**  
**<http://ga3.org/ucc/join.html>**

## UCAN's Mission Statement

The mission of the United Church of Christ HIV and AIDS Network (UCAN) is to build a network of people, congregations and organizations within and beyond the United Church of Christ for care giving, education and prevention in response to the HIV and AIDS pandemic by:

- Providing technical assistance to help congregations and other settings of the church start and build their capacity and programs;
- Offering training in the use of the UCC's comprehensive HIV and AIDS curriculum, *Affirming Persons, Saving Lives*, as well as other HIV and AIDS educational resources;
- Giving leadership for education and information on public policy concerns; and
- Prioritizing its work to bring critical presence to those most affected by HIV and AIDS in the United States and throughout the world