



WITH LOVE AND A HEALING BALM



IDEAS FOR RECOGNIZING WORLD AIDS DAY

December 1, 2005

AIDS. The term stirs strong feelings—from fear to compassion to grief—in people of all ages.

(From "Introduction" to *Affirming Persons—Saving Lives*, a comprehensive AIDS awareness and prevention curriculum resource. Available from UCC Resources, 800-537-3394.)

Viewed by many as someone else's problem, in reality, everyone is affected by AIDS. The Human Immuno-deficiency Virus (HIV), the virus that causes AIDS, does not discriminate. Any human being can become infected with HIV. Each year millions of people throughout the world become infected with HIV and each year millions also die from AIDS related illnesses.

HIV and AIDS make visible the circumstances and conditions in the world which make people vulnerable—poverty, inequality, injustice, and oppression. The highest prevalence of HIV is among people who are poor and powerless—women and girls, young people, children, people of color. Perpetuating fear and misinformation, a culture of silence, fostered by stigma and discrimination, creates the ideal climate for the spread of HIV and a stifling response.

Although we have not yet matched the scale of the pandemic with the resources and effort needed to defeat HIV, the good news is great strides have been made in understanding and treating this disease. Creating visibility, fostering openness, allowing for the free flow of information, and making sure that everyone has access to care are among the important steps effectively addressing this pandemic.

World AIDS Day

HIV and AIDS need to be in our hearts and minds throughout the year. World AIDS DAY is one of the many opportunities we have to create awareness and response. The first observance of World AIDS Day was in 1988 and on the first of December. Each year since then, people, governments, corporations, churches, nonprofit organizations, and other agencies from around the globe and from all walks of life have gathered to participate in World AIDS Day events. These events help us to remember those who have died, those who are living with HIV and AIDS, those who are in the trenches of response, and all who are affected—which is all of us. One way or another we are all affected by HIV.

World AIDS Day events remind us that despite the silence, HIV has not gone away; in fact, it has increased and is increasing. Unless we work together to stop it, it will continue to claim the lives of the most vulnerable people throughout the world on a scale beyond what anyone on earth has ever experienced or imagined.

The church needs to be present on World AIDS Day, recognizing that everyday AIDS is present in the world. Receive the invitation to become involved through this special message from the Most Reverend Desmond M. Tutu, Anglican Archbishop Emeritus of Cape Town:

HIV/AIDS is devastating our communities in Southern Africa and in many other parts of the world. The Church needs to be present and to be known to be present where there is suffering, pain and despair. I pray that you will be guided by the Holy Spirit to speak the truth in love and to pour balm on wounds. May each of you bring the light of Christ and the love of God to your neighbors so you will bring hope and healing to a broken world.

(Reprinted with permission from the Ecumenical Advocacy Alliance website, <http://www.e-alliance.ch/wad.jsp>.)

Recognizing World AIDS Day: Some Worship Ideas

Host or help sponsor an AIDS Memorial Quilt display and service of remembrance.

More than 15 million people throughout the world have seen some of the more than 50,000 panels of the AIDS Memorial Quilt. The Names Project administers the quilt displays and will help you plan an effective quilt display and program for your church and community. For more information and to view quilt panels, visit their website at www.aidsquilt.org.

Organize an Ecumenical or Interfaith Community Service.

We cannot defeat HIV alone; we must partner with others. Working ecumenically or interfaithfully on a community service is not only a wonderful way to observe World AIDS Day, it is an effective way to build relationships and solidarity for responding to HIV/AIDS. UCC Worship resources are accessible online from the *Worship Ways* archives at <http://www.ucc.org/worship/ways/index.html> and the UCC's HIV/AIDS office (see below for contact information).

Create banners or posters that address AIDS related stigma and discrimination.

The Ecumenical Advocacy Alliance (EAA) has some great program tools for education and prevention using art in the form of posters and banners. The

resources will help you design a program to meet your needs whether it is organizing a World AIDS Day poster competition or creating a church banner. View posters from around the world and get more information at the EAA website.http://www.e-alliance.ch/ns_index.jsp, or contact the UCC HIV/AIDS office.

Additional Ideas

- Conduct a Bible Study on Matthew 25:31–46.
- Hold a Candlelight Vigil.
- Have a healing service for persons affected by HIV/AIDS and others in need of healing.

Available Resources

The following UCC HIV/AIDS resources available from UCC Resources:
1-800-537-3394

- *Affirming Persons-Saving Lives*, a comprehensive HIV/AIDS awareness and prevention curriculum designed for Christian Education settings. Free, plus shipping.
- DVD—*Coming to Say Goodbye, Stories of AIDS in Africa*, \$10.00
DVD/VHS—*Courage to Hope, Responding to AIDS in Rural China*, \$10.00

The Following UCC HIV/AIDS Resources available from the UCC HIV/AIDS office: 1-216-736-3218

- World AIDS Day Folder: A collection of HIV/AIDS resources for education, worship and other World AIDS Day activities.
- *Why Worry about HIV/AIDS?* a four-page United Church News special insert from the October 2004 issue.

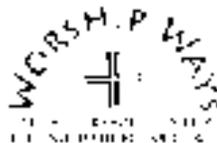
Web links to more HIV/AIDS resources and information:

Ecumenical Advocacy Alliance: <http://www.e-alliance.ch/hivaids.jsp>

Balm in Gilead: <http://www.balmingilead.org/home.asp>

United Nations AIDS Program:

<http://www.unaids.org/en/events/world+aids+day+2004.asp#>



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