



Black Church Week of Prayer for the Healing of AIDS

March 5 – 11, 2006

CHURCH COMMUNITY TIP SHEET



HIV/AIDS has become a crisis in the African American Community. In 2004, African Americans accounted for 20,965 (49 percent) of the 42,514 estimated new AIDS cases diagnosed in the United States. According to the Centers for Disease Control, AIDS is among the top three leading causes of death for African American men aged 25-54 and among the top four causes of death for African American women aged 25-54.¹

In California, African Americans represent nearly 19 percent (10,996) of all people living with AIDS as of November 30, 2005. Eighty percent (8,756) of that number are African American men while 20 percent (2,240) are African American women.²

Introduction

As the Black Church Week of Prayer for the Healing of AIDS embarks on its 17th year, African American churches everywhere are encouraged to participate in a unified effort to address the devastating impact of HIV/AIDS on the Black community.

Black Church Week of Prayer for the Healing of AIDS is the largest national AIDS awareness campaign targeting the African American community. Organized by the Balm in Gilead – a non-profit organization committed to stopping the spread of HIV/AIDS throughout the African Diaspora – the week-long campaign serves to mobilize faith organizations and strengthen their capacity to provide HIV/AIDS education and prevention services in the African American community.

Despite the widespread nature of the epidemic in the United States, discrimination and stigma in the church and the community at large are still major factors contributing to the spread of HIV/AIDS. Discrimination and stigma are also major obstacles to effective HIV prevention. Faith-based organizations—especially the Black church – are strongly encouraged to take decisive measures to reduce the discrimination and stigma faced by those infected with and affected by HIV/AIDS and to confront the social, religious, cultural and political norms and practices that perpetuate it.

Tips on How Your Church Can Get Involved

- Contact your local health department to coordinate HIV testing at your church and set an example by getting tested for HIV.
- Develop a sermon of compassion, love, healing and hope to break through the judgment, fear and stigma so often associated with HIV/AIDS – visit www.healingbeginshere.org for sample sermons.
- Brainstorm with fellow clergy to identify innovative and compassionate ways to address stigma in all its forms. Stigma causes shame, isolation, secrecy and drives transmission of the HIV virus. Look for caring ways to eradicate homophobia and all its forms so that everyone feels welcomed, supported and respected.
- Create safe spaces and/or support groups within your church where people living with HIV/AIDS can talk about their status and where persons impacted by the disease can support one another.
- Make a long-term commitment to develop an HIV/AIDS ministry at your church or expand outreach ministries such as home visits for prayer and scripture or reading to people living with AIDS.
- Purchase specially designed Week of Prayer products from The Balm in Gilead by visiting their website at www.balmingilead.org.

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- During church service, invite people living with HIV/AIDS to share their testimonies with those in your congregation.
- Print a message related to HIV/AIDS in your church bulletin or newsletter, such as the following:

Pray for the Healing of AIDS

From July 1, 2002, through November 30, 2005, there were 39,687 reported cases of HIV infection in California, and African Americans accounted for 20 percent (7,775) of all reported cases.³

African Americans in California are infected with and affected by AIDS at a rate triple their population, which means there is someone sitting here today who needs your prayers and compassion. During this 17th annual observance of the Black Church Week of Prayer for the Healing of AIDS, encourage someone you know to get tested for HIV. Knowing your status can help reduce the risk of infection and offers a chance for early treatment. For confidential testing locations and other resources, visit www.healingbeginshere.org or call the Statewide HIV/AIDS Church Outreach Advisory Board toll free at 1-877-256-1997.

HIV/AIDS Facts

What is HIV?

HIV (**H**uman **I**mmunodeficiency **V**irus) is the virus that causes AIDS.

What does AIDS stand for?

AIDS stands for **A**cquired **I**mmunodeficiency **S**ndrome.

How is HIV transmitted?

This virus may be passed from one person to another when infected blood, semen, or vaginal secretions come in contact with an uninfected person's broken skin or mucous membranes. In addition, infected pregnant women can pass HIV to their baby during pregnancy or delivery, as well as through breast-feeding.⁴

HIV/AIDS Educational AND Awareness Materials

Healing Begins Here: A Pastor's Guidebook for HIV/AIDS Ministry through the Church

A step-by-step resource designed specifically for pastors/bishops with accurate information about HIV/AIDS, its pervasiveness in the African American community and its prevention. Non-profit organizations and churches in California may receive free copies of *Healing Begins Here: A Pastor's Guidebook for HIV/AIDS Ministry through the Church*, quiz cards, bookmarks or lapel pins by visiting www.healingbeginshere.org or by contacting the Statewide HIV/AIDS Church Outreach Advisory Board at 1-877-256-1997.

The Balm In Gilead

Church Bulletin covers, banners, ribbons, etc. are available for purchase from The Balm in Gilead at a nominal fee and help to enhance your outreach efforts. Order these professionally designed items early, as supplies are limited. Visit their website at www.balmingilead.org.

If you have an outreach event, conference or testing day you would like to submit to the board for inclusion in the Community Calendar, please send requests via e-mail to calendar@healingbeginshere.org.

Resources

¹ Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (2004b). Fact Sheet *HIV/AIDS Among African Americans*. <http://www.cdc.gov/hiv/topics/aa/resources/factsheets/aa.htm>

^{2,3} California Department of Health Services, Office of AIDS, *Monthly Summary of California AIDS Cases, November 2005* <http://www.dhs.ca.gov/ps/ooa/Resources/FactSheets.htm>

⁴ Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. *Frequently Asked Questions on HIV and AIDS*. Available at <http://www.cdc.gov/hiv/pubs/faqs.htm>