



UCAN Stop AIDS eNews July 2009

[United Church of Christ HIV & AIDS Network](http://www.ucaninc.org)

## UCC General Synod 27 Wrap-Up

UCAN, Inc. had a very successful time at the 27th General Synod of the United Church of Christ, the denomination's biannual meeting, June 26-30 in Grand Rapids, MI!

### • ***General Synod adopts resolution on comprehensive HIV prevention***

Most significantly, the 27th General Synod of the United Church of Christ called the whole denomination to significant engagement in HIV prevention when it overwhelmingly approved the resolution, "Calling for Comprehensive HIV Prevention in Church and Community".

To read the complete resolution, the press release and more: <http://www.ucaninc.org/>.

### • ***"Immerse Yourself in Healthy Living" Health Fair***

On Monday June 29th UCAN hosted the "Immerse Yourself in Healthy Living" Health Fair at General Synod as a model for Synod-goers on integrating HIV education and prevention service (including testing) with the other health information and screenings typically offered at a health fair.

The Health Fair included free, confidential HIV testing, along with glaucoma and blood pressure screenings and chair massages. Participating organizations also shared information about diabetes, cancer, visual impairment, aging, and prescription medications.

Rev. Mike Schuenemeyer, UCAN Executive Director, explains that "by including HIV testing in health fairs and other health ministries, congregations can help remove the stigma that keeps people from learning their HIV status and if necessary, seeking treatment."

To read more about UCAN's Health Fair at General Synod:  
<https://cmsadmin30.convio.net/preview!www.ucc.org/news/hivchurch.html?autologin=true>.

### • ***"An Ounce of Prevention: Faith in Action for Health" Luncheon***

Dr. Carolyn Parks-Bani, Behavioral Scientist from the Centers for Disease and Control and Prevention, gave the keynote address at the "An Ounce of Prevention: luncheon that UCAN

co-sponsored with the UCC Health Care Justice Ministries at General Synod on Monday June 29th.

"Very clearly," she said, "we are a broken society on many levels: socially, governmentally, economically, racially, and spiritually." The US is the most technologically advanced nation, but not the healthiest. We have, in many respects, the most well-funded, well-prepared and specialized health care system in the world, but not the healthiest.

"Many of the health issues we face," she also reminded us, "are rooted in things that have little to do with the physical conditions themselves, but deal rather, with our mental and psychological states, as well as social and environmental factors, such as race and classism, poverty and the environment. We, as people of faith," Bani urged us, "have a tremendous role to play in the health care arena to bring health and wholeness to others, especially around HIV and AIDS."

- ***River City Saturday Workshop,  
"Will All Those Affected By HIV Please Stand Up?"***

UCAN led the workshop entitled, "Will All Those Affected By HIV Please Stand Up?" during the River City Saturday events at General Synod. The workshop included basic HIV and AIDS education as well as an overview of the work that UCAN does throughout the year.

The group that gathered for this workshop was experienced in dealing with issues surrounding HIV and AIDS, passionate about the topics at hand and energetic to move forward in the ongoing fight against HIV and AIDS. What a great group!

- ***"Church Positive Space" Exhibit***

UCAN hosted a "Church Positive Space" in the Wider Church Ministries booth area in the main Exhibit hall at General Synod. People - young and old, from around the country and the world - flocked to these comfy chairs throughout the exhibit hours.

Over 700 safer sex kits, "Why We Give Out Condoms" cards and informational pamphlets about HIV and AIDS were taken by synod delegates and visitors from this Safe Space, along with the consumption of pounds and pounds of delicious snacks! From everyone's perspective, this was indeed, a welcomed oasis in the midst of several days of intense work.

## **UCC Coalition National Gathering Wrap Up**

UCAN's presence at the UCC Coalition for LGBT Concerns National Gathering June 22-25th in Grand Rapids, MI included leading a very interactive plenary session on HIV and AIDS, hosting an exhibit, and facilitating an affinity group which talked about many things, including our own "HIV stories".

The HIV plenary session included an incredibly moving panel discussion led by the Rev. Dr. Yvette Flunder, presiding Bishop of the Fellowship, Dr. Peter Barbosa, Samuel Merritt University's professor of biochemistry and immunology, and Mr. Oliver W. Martin, III, President of UCAN, Inc. UCAN's own Executive Director, Rev. Mike Schuenemeyer, moderated the panel.

Topics discussed throughout the plenary session included basic HIV and AIDS education as well as an overview of UCAN's ongoing work and the many and varied ways that local churches and individuals can get more involved in the fight against HIV and AIDS. Personal

testimonies from Coalition members who are infected with HIV set a tone of compassion throughout the plenary session.

Several members of the audience spoke out and urged more HIV prevention education, more empathy and more involvement with those affected by HIV. Particular concerns were addressed regarding those how HIV is affecting persons in the transgender community, those who are incarcerated, and young gay men who are at high risk for HIV transmission.

The Coalition's increased commitment as one of UCAN, Inc's partners was evident throughout this passionate dialogue. Many who may have slumped into complacency in recent years were rejuvenated and recommitted themselves to the fight against HIV and AIDS within and beyond their church and LGBT community.

## **"Interfaith for HIV/AIDS": Four Powerful Days of HIV Education and Action**

The New York City Faith in Action HIV & AIDS Coalition, a group of over 50 community and faith-based organizations, organized a citywide effort July 8-11. The series of events started off with a press conference in front of City Hall and included various events throughout the five boroughs.

UCAN joined with The Bronx Clergy Task Force, the Lesbian, Gay Bisexual and Transgender Community Center, the National Black Leadership Commission on AIDS, the Pentecostal House of Prayer's Youth Group, the Staten Island Ryan White HIV Care Network, the Cathedral of God's International Lighthouse of Power, the Assembly of Zion Worship, Convent Avenue Baptist Church, Riverside Church and many others to host roundtable discussions, HIV educational sessions, forums, town hall meetings, health fairs (including free HIV testing), and much more.

Clergy and representatives from community-based organizations also came together at the end of the four busy days to discuss next steps in enhancing collaborative work to decrease HIV infections and provide care for those living with HIV/AIDS throughout the city.

As a visual reminder, shoes were collected and displayed on the steps of City Hall during the press conference on July 10th. Each pair of shoes represented a New Yorker who has become newly infected with HIV. All shoes were then donated to community-based organizations in all five boroughs that assist people living with HIV/AIDS.

For more information: <http://www.nycfia.org/>.

## **Global Fund Faces Budget Shortfalls**

The Global Fund to Fight AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria is currently facing a budget shortfall of about \$3 billion. The Global Fund's Head of Communications, Jon Lidén, emphasizes that the shortfall is not due to the global economic crisis, but it has occurred at least in part because the demand for assistance to combat these diseases increases every year.

The Global Fund needs a substantially higher amount than the one pledged at the last replenishment in Berlin in 2007 (\$10 billion) in order to meet its goals in the coming years. The Global Fund still needs \$170 million to pay for the programs it committed to supporting last year, and the organization will need between \$2.5 billion and \$3 billion to maintain and finance programs planned for 2010.

The US is currently the largest donor (covering about 30% of Fund's the yearly budget), pledging more than \$4.4 billion to support its programs over the past 7 years.

The Global Fund is an international financing institution that invests the world's money to save lives. Since the Global Fund was created in 2002, it has committed money in over 140 countries to support large-scale prevention, treatment and care programs against AIDS, tuberculosis and malaria.

For more information about funding the response to HIV and AIDS, read this new [report](#) by The Kaiser Family Foundation and the Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS (UNAIDS) on 2008 funding for global AIDS efforts from the Group of Eight nations (G8), European Commission (EC) and other donor governments.  
<http://smtp01.kff.org/t/1320/418829/652/0/>

## **HIV Prevention Succeeding in Haiti**

Haiti was once one of the worst islands affected by HIV in the Caribbean. Now, according to UNAIDS, the overall official rate of HIV infection in Haiti is down to 2.2 percent.

In addition, the rate among pregnant women—the only group officially tested from 1993 to 2003 - has dropped from 6.2 percent to 3.1 percent, according to national health surveys and the Haitian Group for the Study of Kaposi's Sarcoma and Opportunistic Infections (GHESKIO), widely considered the world's oldest AIDS clinic.

Researchers believe that these numbers have dropped because several private blood banks were closed and programs were tailored to address the country's specific challenges. For example, GHESKIO now distributes phone cards to patients so that they can remain in contact with their doctors. Furthermore, well-coordinated use of AIDS drugs, education and behavioral changes such as increased condom use have also kept the disease from surging back, at least for now.

There are currently approximately 120,000 people living with HIV in Haiti. Due to grants from UNAIDS and \$420 million from the President's Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief (PEPFAR), about 18,000 of those individuals are now on HIV drugs.

UCC Global Ministries currently has two missionary personnel working in Haiti, Kimberly and Patrick Bentratt. They both work with the National Spiritual Council of Churches in Haiti (CONASPEH). Kimberly advises CONASPEH on health care and diaconal projects and programs. Patrick advises CONASPEH on theological education and diaconal projects and programs.