



UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST
HIV & AIDS NETWORK

UCAN News

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Imagine getting to ZERO

Written by Michael Schuenemeyer

A year ago the member states of the UN signed-on to getting to zero: zero new HIV infections, zero deaths from AIDS and zero stigma and discrimination. That's a tall order and the UN is infamous for commitments it doesn't keep. For example, the goal to achieve universal access by 2010 was missed. What will make the difference this time, particularly in light of the new declaration adopted by UN member states at the recent UN High Level meeting on HIV in New York (June 8-10, 2011)? Can we imagine getting to zero is possible? I can... I honestly and most sincerely can, and imagination is a key ingredient to getting there!

I'm convinced that if we will do a better job of putting our imagination to practical use, it will happen. Why? For at least two reasons:

1. We already know not only how HIV is transmitted but we also know exactly how to prevent transmission.
2. Recent studies have shown that early treatment can reduce the risk of someone HIV+ infecting another person by as much as 96%.

Use your imagination and you can be effective at stopping the HIV epidemic in your church and community to make sure that:

- Everyone knows HIV; how it is transmitted, how to prevent transmission and the state of the epidemic in your community.
- Everyone knows their HIV status. Collaborate with your local health department and AIDS service organization to provide HIV voluntary counseling and testing (VCT) opportunities at your church.

- We've got to get people into early treatment, which is the most effective way to keep persons who are HIV+ healthy and prevent new infections. Too many people wait until they are symptomatic before they get tested. As with most diseases, HIV is harder to treat at that point.
- We must hold each other mutually accountable for ending this epidemic—you and I, our church and other faith communities, civil society and governments, corporations large and small.

I get excited when I think about how the values of extravagant welcome, inclusion and justice can bring us together to get zero. I can't imagine getting there any other way.

Rev. Mike Schuenemeyer is Executive Director of UCAN, Inc. and Executive for Health and Wholeness Advocacy, United Church of Christ Wider Church Ministries.

IMAGINE WHAT'S
POSSIBLE
GOD IS STILL SPEAKING,

28th GENERAL SYNOD
July 1-5, 2011 Tampa, Fla.

UNITED CHURCH
OF CHRIST



Reflections on the UN High Level Meeting on HIV

By Ebony Ross

“I intend to come back to check on the efforts that have been made.” Testimony from a Child at the UN High Level Meeting

New York, NY

The 2011 UNAIDS High Level Meeting (HLM) was absolutely one of the most memorable experiences I have encountered thus far in my life-time. Simply, imagine a sea of individuals from all walks of life gathering together to learn, express and inspire one another for the common cause of HIV & AIDS. Amazing!

I began my journey at the HLM, by sitting in the General Assembly Hall of the United Nations and listening to leaders from various destinations around the globe address the epidemic and its relation to their individual homelands. Samoa, Saudi Arabia, Belize, El Salvador, and Fiji; just to name a few. However, I was most impressed with the representative that took the platform on behalf of Norway.

Getting to Zero, was the Norway’s speaker’s stance regarding HIV/AIDS. He stated the following:

“Stigmas are not acceptable,’ ‘there must be a fight against gender based violence,’ ‘young people must be empowered,’ ‘medicines must be affordable,’ and encouraged ‘faith leaders that are currently in the trenches to continue their efforts because there is a need for faith based entities to be in the struggle and do their part.’”

Although each speaker provided a report on their individual territories, there was a fundamental stance taken. That being, in order to take the HIV/AIDS issue by storm, there must be a unified global approach in attempts to preserve the lives of those that are currently infected and prevent those that are not infected from being becoming infected thru attainable prevention methods.

The ideology of prevention was definitely something that weighed heavily on the hearts of all those in attendance. However, it resonated tremendously at a mid-afternoon gathering, which included speeches by former President-Bill Clinton and Nigerian President Goodluck Jonathan. Although both of them were amazing, the highlight for me was hearing the speech of a child from Africa.

She provided a plea on behalf of her infected mother and all those that are in a position to take a stand to fight on her behalf as a young person. She encouraged the audience not to give up because there is still work to be done and prevention is key. Also, she stated the following: “I intend to come back to check on the efforts that have been made.” WOW! An accountability charge from a youth less than 12-years old was truly powerful. It was a friendly reminder that youth/young adults have a right to take a stand, their voices will be heard regarding prevention efforts, and the epidemic as a whole.

With respect to taking a stand, I ended my last day at the HLM by attending the Interfaith Prayer Breakfast, *A Dialogue on Leadership: Moving from Commitment to Action*, which was held at the Ford Foundation. The only word that can truly describe the spirit that prevailed throughout the breakfast was LOVE. Participants included leaders from several different faiths and high level representatives from the UN, governments, civil society, key populations and people living with HIV. There was a unified tone of concern in the room and a strong sense that it will definitely take faith, prayer and love to assist in the fight to end the epidemic. Prayers, speeches, hugs, laughs, tears and the breaking of bread took place at the event—all in positive, non-discriminatory, all-embracing, and focused fashion. The faith community joined forces, and took a stand to continue their efforts to fill the gaps in research, partnership development and prevention efforts. In my heart, I can proudly say that God was pleased and it was the perfect ending to an amazing week.

In conclusion, I have determined that no matter what global territory you represent, what sexual group you identify with, what age bracket you represent, what economic level you are in, and/or what faith community you serve; at the end of the day we are all affected by HIV/AIDS and love is key.

Ebony Ross is a member of the UCAN Leadership Team, the New York City Faith In Action Coalition for HIV & AIDS and leads the Trinity Pentecostal House of Prayer Youth & Young Adult group in New York, NY.

Bishop Yvette Flunder's address at the Interfaith Breakfast, UN High Level Meeting on HIV

June 10, 2011, Ford Foundation, New York, NY



Good Morning. My name is Bishop Yvette Flunder. My ministry work is primarily located in the United States inner city with and among African/American pastors and faith-based organizations and in the seminaries, where I teach. I also serve churches in three countries in Africa and in Tijuana MX. I am a Gospel Music artist, and I was born into a family of fundamentalist Pentecostals. It is this context and experience that informs my positions, recommendations and conclusions regarding the role of faith in the Human Rights and religious values movement surrounding the AIDS pandemic.

Experts at the Centers for Disease and Control and Prevention ([CDC](#)) have long estimated that 20% of people infected with HIV don't know it. After 30 years of battling this epidemic we continue to see people dying because...One-third of those infected are diagnosed so late in the course of their

infection that they develop AIDS within one year. African Americans are disproportionately represented in these numbers

"There are tens of thousands of people in the U.S. who are

diagnosed late, sometimes too late to save their lives, and certainly too late to help them avoid transmission to others," says Jim Curran, dean of Emory University's Rollins School of Public Health in Atlanta.

The issue has taken on new urgency in light of a study released last month by the [National Institutes of Health](#) showing that HIV therapy cuts by 96% the risk that an infected person will pass HIV to a sexual partner. The testing gap persists 30 years after the first cases of what would become HIV/AIDS were reported by the CDC on June 5, 1981, two decades after the creation of the first HIV test and 15 years after the introduction of effective therapy.

Health officials say people fail to get tested for many reasons, from tight HIV prevention budgets to a lack of awareness of personal risk. I know from my experience, that people often do not want to know their status and the shame, fear and guilt that often accompanies a positive test result is still a reason why many will not get tested even when testing is accessible.

The incidence and prevalence of HIV increases exponentially in the presence of religious based shame. What is evident here today, is a growing movement toward the importance of life and compassion taking precedence over all of the issues, politics, power-struggles and religious differences that have hindered our ability to put an end to AIDS. Love is a family value that exists in virtually every religion. Thanks be to God. A large percentage of the health infrastructure in many countries is carried out by Faith Based Organizations, while there still exists some religious aversion to condom distribution and needle exchange. This disparity suggests we continue to struggle with how we can provide care that translates as prevention in ways that are in keeping with our religious beliefs.

We need to be reminded to scale-up social, emotional and spiritual support; and to act in order to eliminate the root causes of vulnerability and the further spread of HIV.

We believe it is our task to heal and to mitigate suffering in a way that is untied to judgment and tied to justice.

What is the role of faith? We can and must provide care, comfort and self-esteem building but also HIV education, treatment adherence and counseling regarding the concomitant issues surrounding HIV such as substance abuse, unprotected sex and the need for testing and treatment in this atmosphere of tight HIV prevention budgets. Our religious organizations may not be able to perform the comprehensive direct services needed but we can certainly be the entry point to a network of connections to services for the most vulnerable among us.

We have enormous capacity to reach people through our extensive national and international networks.

We have enormous capacity to serve people through our large and willing volunteer networks.

We have enormous capacity to influence our congregants, their families and our communities through our respected voices and spheres of influence.

Poor people are often religious people. Poor people are disadvantaged globally and the poor are the most vulnerable to death from AIDS.

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2011 Stepping Up In Faith

July 10-16, New York, NY

The mission of Stepping Up In Faith For HIV and AIDS events is to educate the communities we serve on issues of HIV/AIDS prevention and care services. The participants are part of the citywide partnership of faith-based, health and secular organizations that have a common goal—to reduce and ultimately eliminate HIV and AIDS in New York City. www.suif.org

Purpose

The purpose of **Stepping Up in Faith for HIV and AIDS** is to bring local attention to the HIV and AIDS epidemic in New York City and the extraordinary role faith communities in partnership with secular communities can play in prevention, education, service and advocacy. We address public policy challenges and solutions as they relate to HIV prevention efforts, advocacy to improve HIV prevention, and efforts that promote and further social justice.

Program Goal & Objectives

The goal of the campaign is to strengthen the capacity of our New York City's faith communities and secular communities to influence social norms and thereby contribute to the prevention of HIV disease and provide compassionate support to those who are affected. Program objectives are:

- To promote a week of HIV and AIDS awareness activities via faith and secular partnerships to educate the people of New York City about HIV/AIDS;
- To raise awareness of faith communities to support HIV testing, health education, prevention interventions and give unconditional love and support to all those who are affected by HIV/AIDS;
- To bring local attention to the critical role faith communities are playing in the HIV and AIDS epidemic in New York City.



STEPPING UP IN FAITH FOR HIV AND AIDS

JULY 10 – 16, 2011
NEW YORK CITY, USA



THE BIG APPLE

UCAN, Inc. Invitation:

2011 National HIV Prevention Conference
August 4-17, Atlanta, GA

If you are attending the conference, please join us on Monday, August 15th for our Roundtable Session:

Stepping Up in Faith for HIV/AIDS through Building collaborative, Inclusive Faith & Secular Community Partnerships

Roundtable Session Number: FR03

Session Date & Time:

**Monday, August 15, 2011
5:15PM-6:00PM**



Dr. Camara Phyllis Jones To Keynote Health Lunch at General Synod 28

Dr. Camara Phyllis Jones will be the keynote speaker for the Health Luncheon sponsored by Justice and Witness Ministries, Council on Racial and Ethnic Ministries (COREM) Health Table and the United Church AIDS Network (UCAN). Her keynotes address is entitled, *Uncovering the Relationship between Racism and Health*.

Dr. Jones will discuss the impact of racism on the health and wellbeing of the nation and bring her expertise and wealth of knowledge to help UCC members examine how the faith community might address racism in health and what role might the faith community play to reduce and/or eliminate racial disparities in coverage, access, quality of care, and treatment. With her renowned allegory "The Gardner's Tale," she will illustrate how the experience of racism is comparable to the proper care and feeding of flowers.

Dr. Jones serves as the Research Director on Social Determinants of Health and Equity at the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, and is a member of First Congregational UCC in Atlanta, GA (Rev. Dwight Andrews, Pastor).

The luncheon will be held

12:00 noon, Monday, July 4, 2011

Tampa Convention Center.

To register for this luncheon please visit:

<http://www.ucc.org/synod/sponsoredmeals.html>

Dr. Jones is also a featured workshop presenter at

Suncoast Saturday, July 2, 2011

Imagine What's Possible: The Health Benefits of Undoing Racism

For more information

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UCAN supports General Synod 28 Resolution: Human Rights Related to Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity

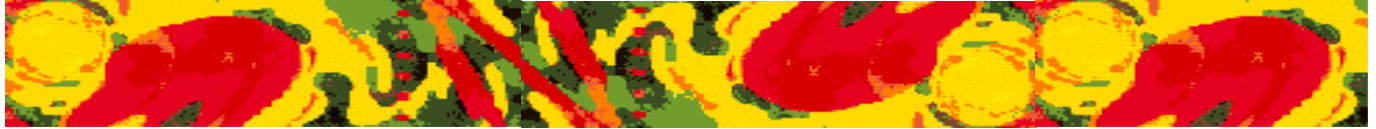
UCAN Inc. supports the resolution *Calling for the Application of International Human Rights Principles in Relation to Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity*. The resolution, submitted by UCC Wider Church Ministries will be under consideration by the 28th General Synod 28 of the UCC, July 1-5, 2011 in Tampa, FL.

Human rights violations targeted toward persons because of their actual or perceived sexual orientation or gender identity constitute an entrenched global pattern of serious concern. These human rights violations not only demean the worth and dignity endowed by God to every human person, but they also contribute to stigma and discrimination. These violations seriously impede effective HIV prevention efforts wherever they occur (<http://www.unaids.org/en/strategygoalsby2015/punitivelaws/>)

The resolution calls for church and society to recognize that the Universal Declaration of Human Rights should be universally applied, including in relation to sexual orientation and gender identity. It calls for support of the Yogyakarta Principles, which outlines a set of international principles relating to sexual orientation and gender identity (SOGI).

The Yogyakarta Principles were created in 2006 by a distinguished group of international human-rights experts. They affirm the legally binding international human rights standards with which all States must comply and apply them to SOGI. These principles offer a different future where all people are born free and equal in dignity and in which rights can fulfill that precious birthright.

Read more at www.ucc.org/synod/resolutions/



Pernessa Seele, CEO of the Balm in Gilead at launch of the online version of *Affirming Persons, Saving Lives*, Amistad Chapel, UCC Church House

Affirming Persons, Saving Lives Is Online: www.ucc.org/apsl

Affirming Persons, Saving Lives, the UCC's comprehensive HIV prevention curriculum was released online during the National Week of Prayer for the Healing of AIDS, March 8, 2011. The curriculum deals forthrightly with the many complex issues that must be addressed to save lives, responding to the real concerns of real people facing the dangers of HIV transmission and AIDS.

Cally Rogers Witte, Executive Minister for Wider Church Ministries which published the curriculum, Geoffrey Black, UCC General Minister and President, and Pernessa Seele (pictured, left), CEO of the Balm in Gilead were on hand for the launch which took place at the Amistad Chapel of the UCC denominational offices.

Designed for multi-cultural Christian education settings, the groundbreaking resource also can be adapted for use by health and human service institutions, schools, health departments and community based organizations. In age-appropriate, non-judgmental language, APSL nurtures self-esteem and integrates components for effective AIDS education.

APSL stresses that abstinence from sexual intercourse and drug use is the only 100-percent safe way to prevent HIV transmission.

HIV & AIDS Calendar

2011

June 27 — National HIV Testing Day

September 18 — National HIV/AIDS and Aging Awareness Day

September 27 — National Gay Men's HIV/AIDS Awareness Day

October 15 — National Latino HIV/AIDS Awareness Day

December 1 — World AIDS Day

2012

February 7 — National Black HIV/AIDS Awareness Day

March 4-10 — National Week of Prayer for the Healing of AIDS

March 10 — National Women and Girls HIV/AIDS Awareness Day

March 20 — National Native HIV/AIDS Awareness Day

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Lori Tisher (Vice Chair)

St. Paul's Community Church, Cleveland, OH

Rose Wright Scott

Franklinton Center, Whitakers, NC

Bishop Yvette Flunder's address at the Interfaith Breakfast

(Continued from page 3)

I would encourage global leaders, including religious leaders, politicians, business people and people living with HIV to partner in a collective, active Theology of Healing...

Healing, without judgment...and increased understanding of the moral value of persons most marginalized by religion and society, as these are often the persons at highest risk for HIV transmission. My experience has taught me that faith communities must reach out to the farthest edge where ideologies, theologies and pejorative assumptions of people lie and seek to increase understanding for these communities. We have an active ministry with and to the Transgender community in our church in San Francisco. This ministry includes support groups, case management, housing, and spiritual support for this community that has the highest incidence and prevalence rates in our city. As a result we have an oasis of a sort where Transgender sisters and brothers are adhering to treatment, practicing safer sex, procuring and sustaining housing and thriving. And now they have their own gospel choir!

We believe it is our task to heal and to mitigate suffering in a way that is untied to judgment and tied to justice.

A few years ago we were graced with a visit to our ministry by a gentle and caring man...Father Jose Luis Mendez Davalos, Delegate for Healthcare Professionals from the Pontifical Council for Pastoral Health, visiting on behalf of The Holy See and The Vatican. Our afternoon together gave us an opportunity to share our work of serving people in this horrific pandemic.

We concluded that the human family has many faith paths, many polities and politics, many definitions of family but a clear and consistent mandate to love one another with a particular heart for those who are the most disadvantaged...those who Jesus called the least of these my little ones.

This is what we, the Faith community must bring to this commitment to redouble our efforts to serve, work, love and pray until there is a cure. God Bless You.

Watch the webcast of the Interfaith Prayer Breakfast at the UN High Level Meeting on HIV:

http://unfpa.org/public/AIDS_Summit2011



UCAN at General Synod 28, Tampa, FL

June 27-30, National Gathering

UCC Coalition for LGBT Concerns

UCAN will share exhibit space with the Health & Wholeness Advocacy Office

July 1-5, General Synod

Visit UCAN's Church Positive Space, part of the Wider Church Ministries/Global Ministries exhibit.

July 1

1.00pm Educational Intensive: GS Resolution—Calling for the Application of International Human Rights Principles in Relation to Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity. See resolution at www.ucc.org/synod

July 3

8.30am Committee Deliberations

Your Church Better Workshops

2.30pm 5 Opportunities to Increase UCC Leadership in HIV Response through the National Week of Prayer for the Healing of AIDS.

3.00pm & 5.30pm 4 Important Ways Your Church Can Stop HIV

July 4

12.00pm Health Luncheon

Your Church Better Workshops

4.30pm 5 Opportunities to Increase UCC Leadership in HIV Response through the national Week of Prayer for the Healing of AIDS.



Next Issue:
Winter/Spring 2012

Please support UCAN's Mission

Contributions may be made online or sent to UCAN, Inc. at the addresses below.

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UCAN's Mission Statement

The mission of UCAN, Inc. (The United Church of Christ HIV and AIDS Network) 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.