



UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST
HIV & AIDS NETWORK

UCAN News

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Special points of interest:

- New UCAN Ad
- "High Level Religious Leaders Meeting: Together We Must Do More"

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To Haiti With Love

A Benefit Concert And Healing Prayer Worship Service for HIV+ Haitians

On January 12 a magnitude 7.1 earthquake shook Port-au-Prince, Haiti. The earthquake left hundreds of thousands dead and millions homeless. Part of the mission of UCAN, Inc. is to bring critical presence to those most affected by HIV and AIDS in the United States and throughout the world. UCAN's understanding of critical presence is taken from Global Ministries', "timely and appropriate meeting of God's people and creation at the point of deepest need: spiritually, physically, emotionally, and/or economically."

On March 7, Mayflower Congregational United Church of Christ (Oklahoma City, OK) was the host of a concert to raise money for medications for HIV positive persons in Haiti. Haiti has one of the highest HIV prevalence rates in the western world. It was a time of healing prayer, worship and musical reflection.

Donations from the benefit went to Housing Works, a New York based, minority-controlled organization that is the largest community-based AIDS service organization in the United States. After the devastating earthquake, Hous-



(L to R): Dr. Gaetane Jean-Marie, Dr. Maria del Guadalupe Davidson, Rev. Loyce Newton-Edwards, Senator Connie Johnson

ing Works responded immediately in collaboration with PHAP+ to provide assistance and medical supplies to HIV+ Haitians. PHAP+ is a coalition of Haiti-based AIDS groups led by people living with HIV/AIDS.

Since their founding in 1990, Housing Work has provided lifesaving services, such as housing, medical and mental health care, meals, job training, drug treatment, HIV prevention education, and social support to more than 20,000 homeless and low-income New Yorkers living with HIV and AIDS.

The date of the concert also marked the beginning of the

National Week of Prayer for the Healing of AIDS, Mayflower Church took advantage of this opportunity to educate participants about HIV prevention facts; encouraged and supported HIV testing; advocated for universal access to care and treatment; and love unconditionally all persons living with and affected by HIV.

The National Week of Prayer for the Healing of AIDS is the inclusive, expansion of the highly successful Black Church Week of Prayer for the Healing of AIDS which concluded its 20th year anniversary in 2009.

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UCC Regional Youth Events This Summer!

Throughout the summer of 2010, UCAN will be a presenter at all six UCC Regional Youth Events (RYE) of the UCC held across the country. Youth and their adult leaders will gather from the local churches in each region for a time of worship, learning, music, service and fun.

At each RYE, UCAN will present a workshop entitled "Lead, Empower, Deliver: What Youth Can Do To Stop HIV." In addition to basic information about HIV transmission, the workshop will engage young people in activities and conversations about their important role in stopping the spread of HIV and caring for those affected.

Young people (ages 15-24) of all races are among those with the highest rates of HIV infection, accounting for 45% of all new infections worldwide (UNAIDS 2009). Developing peer youth leaders with knowledge and skills in addressing HIV and AIDS is an important and effective way to not only reduce transmission of HIV, but also to ending HIV related stigma and discrimination. The "Lead, Empower, Deliver" workshop is designed to help youth learn what they can do to create awareness, reduce risks and prevent the spread of HIV.

Southern Regional Youth Event

Theme: Another Brick in the Wall: Tearing Down Inequality, Building Up Hope

June 10-13, 2010

Dillard University, New Orleans, LA

Great Lakes Regional Youth Event

Theme: Challenges, Choices, Consequences...

June 17-20, 2010

Defiance College, Defiance, OH

New England Regional Youth Event

Theme: Inside Out, Outside In: Finding Our Way in God's World

June 24-27, 2010

Boston University, Boston, MA

Western Regional Youth Event

Theme: Reach Beyond the Big Sky

July 6-10, 2010

Montana State University, Billings, MT

West Central Regional Youth Event

Theme: Agape: God's Love for Us All

July 14-18th, 2010

Park University, Parkville, MO

Mid-Atlantic Regional Youth Event

Theme: Take the Journey...Follow the Yellow

Brick Road

July 21-25, 2010

Susquehanna University, Selinsgrove, PA



National AIDS Strategy



Through the fall the White House Office of National AIDS Policy (ONAP) held community discussions across the United States and the Virgin Islands for input in the development of a U.S. national AIDS strategy.

In December, at the National HIV and AIDS Strategy Town Hall Meeting in Cleveland, Ohio, Rev. Lori Tisher, Vice-Chair of the UCAN Leadership Team, shared, "UCAN believes that a national network of faith-based organizations needs to be established which would not only serve as a place to share effective models and best practices, but also to enable faith communities to more fully access and build their vast capacity for HIV prevention, care and support."

UCAN also was able to play a role at the President's Advisory Council on HIV and AIDS (PACHA) on February 1 in Washington D.C., where Bishop John Selders was a representative. The President's Advisory Council on HIV and AIDS was established to provide policy recommendations on the U.S. Government's response to the AIDS epidemic.

Rev. Selders presented UCAN's challenge to PACHA in calling for the council to "work strategically in this current

political environment to advance policies and programs that prevent new cases of HIV infection, provide universal access to treatment and offer compassionate care to people who are living with and affected by HIV/AIDS".

UCAN has advocated that a U.S. National AIDS strategy, needs to include a strong, adequately funded, and effective HIV prevention component that gives focused attention to high risk populations and vulnerable groups. "As a faith-based organization with values of radical inclusion and extravagant welcome, we believe that more must be done to access and increase effective HIV prevention efforts," said Rev. Mike Schuenemeyer, UCAN's Executive Director.

To Haiti With Love

(Continued from page 1)

The Black Church Week of Prayer for the Healing of AIDS was the nation's FIRST national mobilization campaign that specifically focused on HIV/AIDS. In 2010, the event called America's faith communities of all races, creeds and cultures to prayer and to educate their congregations and others about the ever-alarming AIDS epidemic in the United States.

The afternoon included music from the Mayflower UCC choir, Mixed Company & Discord, University of Oklahoma Gospel Choir, A Touch of Class and singers Mrs. Kelly Lambeth Edwards, and Mrs. Glenda Stansbury. Various interfaith ministers also offered healing prayers during worship. "To Haiti With Love," was one of the most diverse musical events ever held in Oklahoma City. The musicians and participants and those who were in attendance at the concert resembled a true "mosaic," of the Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.'s vision of the Beloved Community. In addition to the funds raised for Haitians who are HIV+, the event was deeply moving, and quite inspirational.

Featured speakers included Oklahoma State Senator Connie Johnson, (D-48), who traveled to Haiti, and serves on the National Board of Directors for "The Haiti Support Group,"

an activity of The Institute of the Black World; Dr. David C. Teague, University of Oklahoma Health Sciences Center, Mayflower UCC member, who recently traveled to Haiti on a medical mission team; and Dr. Gaetane Jean-Marie, a Haitian and University of Oklahoma Associate Professor, Educational Administration, Curriculum & Supervision (EACS).

The benefit concert at Mayflower Congregational UCC raised \$4,251.57. One Great Hour of Sharing has matched this donation and a grant of \$10,000 has been provided to Housing Works and PHAP+ to provide much needed medicines and essential care to persons living with HIV/AIDS and those at risk of infection.

¹ *Global Ministries is the common witness of United Church of Christ and the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) responsible for nurturing relationships with international partners on behalf of Disciples and the UCC.*

www.globalministries.org

**UNITED CHURCH
OF CHRIST**



High Level Religious Leaders Meeting: Together We Must Do More

(from the Ecumenical Advocacy Alliance: www.e-alliance.ch)

High level religious and spiritual leaders from many of the world's major religions pledged "stronger, more visible and practical leadership in the response to HIV" at the global High Level Summit of Religious Leaders on HIV held 22-23 March 2010 in Den Dolder, The Netherlands.

Some 40 Baha'i, Buddhist, Christian, Hindu, Jewish, Muslim and Sikh leaders met with the Executive Directors of the Joint United Nations Program on HIV/AIDS (UNAIDS) and the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA), the AIDS Ambassadors of The Netherlands and Sweden, leaders and representatives of networks of people living with HIV and other organizations active in the response to HIV.

Participants affirmed in their concluding statement the "renewed sense of urgency" to prioritize and strengthen the response to HIV. Such response includes "holistic prevention" in addition to reaching universal access to treatment, care and support. The statement called for the "universal respect for the human rights of all people living with and affected by and at risk of HIV infection" and the "respect for the dignity of every human being". Leaders also called for "a massive social mobilization" to support services for women to eliminate the transmission of HIV from mother to child.

In addition religious leaders drafted and personally signed a pledge to commit themselves to strengthened efforts to respond to HIV. The pledge includes "deepening meaningful engagement with people living with HIV" and "acting decisively to protect human rights within my faith community; through collaboration among other religious leaders of different faiths; and by influencing local, national, regional and global decision-making processes on HIV."

"Together we are greater and bigger than each one alone," stated Thoraya Obaid, Executive Director of UNFPA in her address to the Summit. "Our work together proves that interventions can be successful and sustainable if change is inclusive, if it emerges from within the faith and culture of the people themselves, if people of all age groups and living or not living with HIV are secure in their sense of belonging and when they are fully engaged, and when all partners are respected and their contributions valued," she said.



Religious leaders speaking at the Summit emphasized that AIDS is an illness, and not a sin and underlined that God is for everybody and that everybody is equally important to God. "Due to our silence, people are suffering. We need to speak out", said Dr Mohamed Gemea from the office of the Grand Imam of Al-Azhar. He pointed out that every person – ill or healthy – is part of the same human family.

For many, the statement of personal commitment will not only engage more religious leaders but add a vital component of accountability.

My Personal Commitment to Action

As a religious leader, I am convinced that my faith must be more visible and active to halt the spread of HIV and reverse this pandemic. For three decades now, HIV has continued to spread across all levels of our societies. Stigma and discrimination against people living with HIV continues to fuel ignorance, injustice, denial and hate. At this critical point in the epidemic, I need to be clear in my words and actions that stigma and discrimination towards people living with or affected by HIV is unacceptable.

Fundamental to my faith is the respect for human dignity and the value of human life. Such respect and value is central to my response to HIV.

Therefore, I commit to exercising stronger, more visible, and practical leadership in the response to the HIV pandemic - increasing commitment, deepening meaningful engagement with people living with HIV, and acting decisively to protect human rights within my faith community; through collaboration among other religious leaders of different faiths; and by influencing local, national, regional and global decision-making processes on HIV.

(Continued on page 5)

Lead, Empower, Deliver

My Personal Commitment to Action:

(Continued from page 4)

Conscious of the specific needs of all those affected by HIV, this leadership means...

To people living with HIV, I commit myself to:

- working tirelessly to end all stigmatizing attitudes and actions until people living with HIV are fully included in our religious communities and societies;
- supporting concerted efforts and partnerships to provide support including health care and education in ways that respect privacy and dignity;
- seeking to understand and respond to the specific needs and situations of different communities affected by HIV to enable all people living with HIV to participate fully in society;
- providing spiritual support and resources to give hope and enable positive living, assuring you that HIV cannot separate you from love, mercy, compassion, forgiveness.

To children, I commit to:

- Recognizing your rights, including health, education and support, that will help you celebrate childhood and learn values and ethical practices for safer and healthier living.
- To young people, I commit to:
- Listening to your needs and empowering you with the values and support to help protect you from violence and suppression and from behaviours that create risks for yourself and others;
- Enabling and facilitating your leadership and participation.

To women and girls, I commit to:

- Recognizing your special vulnerability and roles as caregivers and mothers and working tirelessly to ensure you have the services you require for prevention, treatment, care and support.
- Exercising respect and challenging any oppressive systems of power within my religious community and society which fuel violence and injustice;
- Providing space for your voice and leadership in our communities.
- To men and boys, I commit to:
- Encouraging understanding of power that allows people to relate to one another with dignity and love.
- Supporting leadership and decision making that addresses the root causes of HIV.

To my religious community, I commit to:

- Doing all I can to break the barriers of silence and exclusion to fully and openly include people living with HIV and their families in our religious communities;
- Leading by example and encouraging my religious community to deepen its engagement in the response to HIV, including advocating for prevention, treatment, care and support for all.
- To networks, organizations and public institutions, I commit to:
- Fully supporting all efforts to extend services and support that will enable an HIV-free generation by 2015;
- Challenging and supporting governments to meet their moral duty to implement their promises on HIV in their priorities, practices and financial support.
- partnering with you to combine our experiences, approaches and expertise to reach our common goal of halting the spread of HIV and reversing the pandemic.

To those I am addressing in this pledge and to other religious leaders who join me in this covenant/pledge, I commit to:

- reporting through available channels every 18 months how I have worked to fulfill my pledge.

For more information about the summit and religious leaders may sign-on their own personal commitment at: <http://www.e-alliance.ch/en/s/hivaid/s/summit-of-high-level-religious/>

STOP AIDS.

LIVE THE PROMISE.



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International AIDS Conference



AIDS 2010

XVIII INTERNATIONAL AIDS CONFERENCE
JULY | 18-23 | 2010 | VIENNA AUSTRIA

Rights Here, Right Now

The 18th International AIDS Conference, AIDS 2010, will take place in Vienna, Austria, July 18-23, under the theme "Rights Here, Rights Now." The conference will focus on human rights as fundamental to an effective response to HIV. It will highlight how the scale up of HIV programs has contributed to broader health and development goals.

AIDS 2010 will also provide a multidisciplinary forum for networking and the sharing of information. It is an opportunity for the many stakeholders involved in HIV to take stock of where the epidemic is, evaluate recent scientific developments and lessons learnt, and collectively chart a course forward. In particular, AIDS 2010 will facilitate stronger linkages between science and community, including the faith community.

Rights Here! Rights Now! What's Faith got to do with it? The Ecumenical Advocacy Alliance (EAA), with many partners, spearheads planning for faith-based participation at AIDS 2010. The EAA is working with a multi-faith team to prepare the multi-faith pre-conference will happen on July 17. Participants in pre-conference will

- Explore, with a diverse range of plenary speakers, how faith traditions compel us to achieve universal access to HIV treatment, care, support and prevention, and can overcome existing barriers to such access.
- Actively participate in breakout sessions to discuss theological and practical responses to HIV and AIDS in more depth
- Network with people of faith involved in the global response to HIV and AIDS
- Prepare and strategize for faith-based participation in AIDS 2010.

At AIDS 2010, the advocacy focus of the EAA will be related to access to medicines and ending stigma and discrimination emphasizing the dignity and worth of every person.

Access to medicines

Access to medicines is vitally important not only for the treatment of HIV, but also to effective HIV prevention. At AIDS 2010, the multi-faith advocacy effort work to address:

1. *Food and HIV.* There significant interrelationships between food consumption and the effectiveness of antiretroviral drugs (ARVs) for people living with HIV; the impact of HIV and AIDS on agricul-

tural production; and how poverty and food insecurity can lead to increased vulnerability to HIV transmission.

2. *Vertical transmission* (transmission from mother to child) The advocacy will focus on the importance of both diagnostics and treatment, and encourage support of the Born HIV Free campaign. (www.bornhivfree.org)

3. *Patent Pool* EAA will convene bilateral meetings with Pharma concerning issues related to the Patent Pool and access to pediatric formulations of ARVs. There will also be efforts to stress the negative impact of funding flat-lining on faith-based HIV service delivery.

Ending stigma and discrimination

The human rights march will provide a good opportunity to raise the visibility of faith-based groups' involvement in and commitment to combating stigma and discrimination.

1. *Criminalization* A number of panel sessions on human rights on the agenda for AIDS 2010, including a session on faith and human rights. Bishop Yvette Flunder, from City of Refuge UCC (a UCAN Network Member), will be a presenter. The criminalization of HIV, sexual orientation and gender identity will be discussed in relation to how they are a barrier to effective prevention, treatment and care.
2. *Travel restrictions* Although the U.S. has lifted its HIV related travel ban, travel restrictions still exist in 59 other countries. These travel restrictions have no valid public health rationale and may in fact undermine HIV prevention and other efforts to stop the epidemic by fuelling stigma and discrimination and causing individuals to hide their status.

EAA has developed an educational travel restrictions exercise/game, "Around the World with HIV" which be used at the Multi-Faith Networking Zone.

UCAN's Executive Director, Michael Schuenemeyer, serves as a member of the EAA's HIV Strategy Group, which has helped to plan and coordinate the faith activities at AIDS 2010, including the Multi-faith Pre-conference.

Lead, Empower, Deliver: Live the Promise to Stop AIDS



Every 9½ minutes another person
in the United States will become infected with HIV

The United Church of Christ HIV & AIDS Network • ucan@ucc.org • 216.736.2284

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Next Issue:
Fall/Winter 2010-2011

Please support UCAN's Mission

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

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ucaninc.org

UCAN's Founding Gift Appeal extended

UCAN's Founding Gift Appeal has been extended through December 31, 2010.

UCAN is providing significant leadership and programs toward living into a world without AIDS. The relationships we have built and the partnerships we are fostering are key to that future.

With passage of General Synod's HIV prevention resolution, we need your

help/your partnership, more than ever. Join us in keeping the promise to stop AIDS by making a financial gift to UCAN today!

A gift in any amount will make a difference! Gifts of \$600 or more, now through December 31, 2010, will be considered a "Founding Gift". A plaque will be created for display at the UCAN office to acknowledge those who give at the Founding Gift level.

We thank you for considering making a gift to UCAN! We look forward to your partnership as we offer compassion and hope, and together create a world free of HIV and AIDS.

Donate online:
www.ucaninc.org

Or, send checks to:
UCAN, Inc.,
700 Prospect Ave E,
Cleveland, OH 44115-1100



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.