



UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST  
HIV & AIDS NETWORK

# UCAN News

Volume 4, Issue II

World AIDS Day, December 1, 2009

## Special points of interest:

- "Calling for Comprehensive HIV Prevention in Church and Community" Resolution
- World AIDS Day Litany

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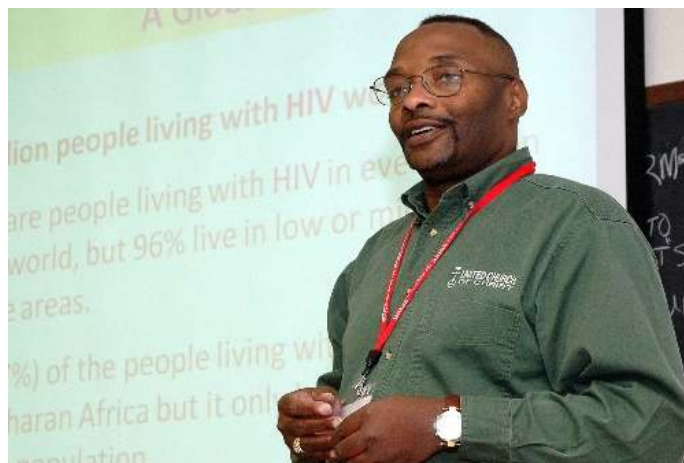
## SOS — Spiritual Outreach Services

Working Together: Houses of Worship and Community Agencies Provide HIV Prevention

Faith-based organizations are often wary of inviting AIDS service organizations into their congregations. Yet a partnership between AIDS Service Center NYC (ASCNYC) and the United Church of Christ HIV/AIDS Network (UCAN) proves such an alliance can lead to incredible success.

In 2006, ASC and UCAN embarked on a joint venture to bring HIV prevention education to local communities of faith. The result was **Spiritual Outreach Services (SOS)**. SOS provides peer-delivered outreach, HIV prevention education, counseling, testing and referral services to houses of worship in East and Central Harlem, and East New York — communities with alarming rates of HIV infection.

"In the past, there's been a separation of church and community in the conversations about AIDS, sex and condoms," says ASC's CEO Sharen Duke. "By partnering with faith-based organizations, SOS has bridged that gap. Now houses of worship are inviting us into their congregations to talk about HIV



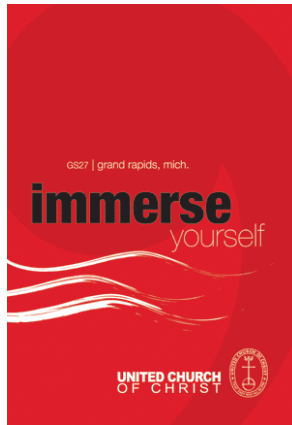
Photography: David Nager/ASC prevention, using condoms, and being safe. We are now being invited to the table as welcomed guests, rather than feared outsiders."

ASC board member Oliver Martin III, who chairs the Global HIV/AIDS Ministry at Riverside Church and is closely involved with SOS, agrees. "SOS can be a model for communities across the country to bring HIV prevention and testing services to local houses of worship," he says "At Riverside Church, I knew our ministry reached many people in need of HIV/AIDS services, but we lacked the capacity to run a full-service HIV/AIDS prevention program in-house.

We needed a partner with both resources and willingness to fill that gap in faith communities. ASC's open-door policy made it an ideal partner."

According to Brenda Starks-Ross, ASC's chief operating officer, partnerships are making a difference in all kinds of communities of faith. "ASC worked with Riverside Church and we created a formal service agreement where ASC would bring its HIV prevention and testing resources to faith communities," she said. "UCAN also agreed to create introductions between ASC and faith communities. Through SOS, we've brought HIV testing

(Continued on page 7)



## Report from General Synod 27

Leading and sponsoring several events, UCAN had a visible and meaningful presence at the UCC's 27th General Synod in Grand Rapids, Michigan, June 26-30. Here's some of what took place.

### 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*.

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

On Monday June 29th, UCAN hosted the "Immerse Yourself in Healthy Living" Health Fair which integrated HIV education and prevention service with the events typically offered at a health fair. The Health Fair included free, confidential HIV testing, along with glaucoma and blood pressure screenings and chair massages. 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."

### "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 luncheon that UCAN co-sponsored with the UCC Health Care Justice Ministries at General Synod. "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

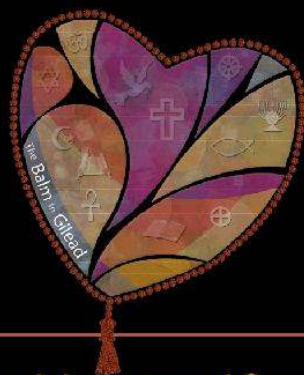
"Will All Those Affected By HIV Please Stand Up?"

UCAN led the workshop entitled, "Will All Those Affected By HIV Please Stand Up?" during the 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.

### "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 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. From everyone's perspective, this was indeed, a welcomed oasis in the midst of several days of intense work.

**NATIONAL  
WEEK OF  
PRAYER  
FOR THE  
HEALING  
OF AIDS**



Healing Through Prayer, Education, Advocacy and Service!

**MARCH 7-13, 2010**

[www.NationalWeekofPrayerfortheHealingofAIDS.org](http://www.NationalWeekofPrayerfortheHealingofAIDS.org)

A Vision of Unity and Faith from The Balm In Gilead, Inc.

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For the past several years, The Balm in Gilead has led the Black Church Week of Prayer for the Healing of AIDS, but has been called to expand the involvement to include all faiths.

**UCAN** is a new partner with The Balm in Gilead in this effort, calling people of all faiths to a week of prayer, education, advocacy and serve. Rev. Geoffrey Black, General Minister and President of the United Church of Christ, will serve as a national spokesperson for the event.

## General Synod 27 Resolution: Calling for Comprehensive HIV Prevention in Church and Community

Whereas, Our Christian faith calls upon the disciples of Jesus Christ to follow Jesus' teachings and the examples of Jesus' ministry; and, Jesus reached out with compassion and healing to those who were sick and marginalized, and called 160 people of faith to be ready and alert, for example:

- Matthew 14:14. *When he went ashore, he saw a great crowd; and he had compassion for them and cured their sick.*
- Mark 1:40-42. *A leper came to him begging him, and kneeling he said to him, "If you choose, you can make me clean." Moved with pity, Jesus stretched out his hand and touched him, and said to him, "I do choose. Be made clean!" Immediately the leprosy left him, and he was made clean.*
- Luke 12:39. *But know this: if the owner of the house had known at what hour the thief was coming, he would not have let his house be broken into.*
- Matthew 25:1-13. *Keep awake therefore, for you know neither the day nor the hour and,*

There are an estimated 33 million people living with HIV worldwide and that for every 5 new HIV infections there are only 2 people who receive medical treatment (UNAIDS, June 2008), demonstrating that the world is losing the fight against HIV and AIDS. Treatment alone cannot stop the HIV and AIDS pandemic; and,

The United States Center for Disease Control (CDC) released new data revealing that HIV infections in the US are 40% higher than previously thought and reporting estimates that there are more than 1 million persons living with HIV in the U.S. and 20% of them do not know they are HIV positive (August 3, 2008); and,

The global health community, including UNAIDS, the World Health Organization, the U.S. CDC, and the U.S. National Institute for Health, has called for increased best practice, comprehensive HIV prevention efforts, especially with vulnerable groups and high risk populations; and,

The CDC has encouraged everyone to know their HIV status; and,

The international HIV and AIDS community has recognized the important role of faith communities like the United Church of Christ in HIV prevention and care, and the untapped capacity that exists in such communities for effective response; and,

The Fourteenth General Synod of the United Church of Christ adopted the Resolution on Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome (AIDS) and declared its "compassionate concern and support for all persons with AIDS, their lovers, spouses, families and friends" and the Sixteenth General Synod of the United Church of Christ adopted the pronouncement "Health and Wholeness in the Midst of a Pandemic" and called the United Church of Christ to leadership in response to AIDS.

**Therefore let it be resolved** that the Twenty-Seventh General Synod of the United Church of Christ: Declares its compassionate concern about the growing human immunodeficiency virus (HIV) epidemic in the United States and throughout the world, and its support for all those living with and affected by HIV; and,

Reaffirms the Pronouncement on Health and Wholeness in the Midst of a Pandemic adopted by the Sixteenth General Synod, the Resolution on Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome (AIDS) adopted by the Fourteenth General Synod of the United Church of Christ and the Resolution, "Responding to AIDS: Endorsement and Enactment of the "Ten Principles for the Workplace" adopted by the Seventeenth General Synod; and,

Affirms current efforts to, and calls on all clergy and lay persons in all settings of the United Church of Christ to:

- become knowledgeable about HIV and AIDS,
- understand how HIV is transmitted and how it is prevented,
- work to prevent its transmission,
- reduce stigma and discrimination, and
- help the whole church to increase its HIV competency; and,

Strongly urges all clergy and lay persons in the United Church of Christ to know their HIV status; and,

Calls on local churches and other settings of the church to develop and implement best practice comprehensive HIV prevention education, programs and strategies for church and community, with particular attention to vulnerable groups and at risk populations; and,

Calls on the United Church of Christ HIV and AIDS Network (UCAN, Inc.) to work collaboratively within and beyond the United Church of Christ to provide technical assistance, training, education, and resources to help all settings of the church develop and implement comprehensive HIV prevention strategies and programs for church and community, and encourage the use of existing resources such as *Affirming Persons, Saving Lives* and the comprehensive sexuality education curriculum, *Our Whole Lives*; and,

Calls on local, state and federal governments to work together to develop and implement a national HIV and AIDS strategy that includes increased funding for best practice comprehensive HIV prevention programs; and,

Calls on Wider Church Ministries to report on the progress of the implementation of this resolution to the next three General Synods.

### FUNDING

The funding for the implementation of this resolution will be made in accordance with the overall mandates of the affected agencies and the funds available.

### IMPLEMENTATION

In collaboration with Wider Church Ministries, UCAN, Inc. is responsible for developing the strategy and program designed to implement this resolution.

UNITED CHURCH  
OF CHRIST





# World AIDS Day Universal Access & Human Rights

New York June 16th – Ahead of this year’s World AIDS Day, the United Nations Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon, the World AIDS Campaign and the Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS (UNAIDS) have come together to announce the theme of “Universal Access and Human Rights”.

The theme has been chosen to address the critical need to protect human rights and attain access for all to HIV prevention, treatment, care and support. It also acts as a call to countries to remove laws that discriminate against people living with HIV, women and marginalized groups. Countries are also urged to realize the many commitments they made to protect human rights in the Declaration of Commitment on HIV/AIDS (2001) and the Political Declaration on HIV/AIDS (2006). Speaking ahead of the announcement at the United Nations in New York, Michel Sidibé Executive Director of UNAIDS said,

“Achieving universal access to prevention, treatment, care and support is a human rights imperative. It is essential that the global response to the AIDS epidemic is grounded in human rights and that discrimination and punitive laws against those most affected by HIV are removed.”

Many countries still have laws and policies that impede access



**“those hit the hardest, the poor and marginalized in society often don’t have a say when big decisions and laws are made.”**

to HIV services and criminalize those most vulnerable to HIV. These include laws that criminalize men who have sex with men, transgendered people and lesbians; laws that criminalize sex workers; and laws criminalizing people who use drugs and the harm reduction measures and substitution therapy they need. Some 84 countries have reported that they have laws and policies that act as obstacles to effective HIV prevention, treatment, care and support for vulnerable populations.

Speaking from Cape Town, South Africa, The World AIDS Campaign Executive Director Marcel van Soest said, “The

epidemic has not gone away, tens of millions of people are still affected, but those hit the hardest, the poor and marginalized in society often don’t have a say when big

decisions and laws are made. Their fundamental right to essential health care and life free from fear of stigma and discrimination must be strengthened.”

Governments continue to pass and enforce overly-broad laws that criminalize the transmission of HIV which are in direct contradiction to their commitments to “promote... a social and legal environment that is supportive of safe and voluntary disclosure of HIV status.” Some 59 countries still have laws that restrict the entry, stay and residence of people living with HIV based on their positive HIV status only, discriminating against them in their freedom of movement and right to work.

At the same time, laws and regulations protecting people with HIV from discrimination and women from gender inequality and sexual violence are not fully implemented or enforced.

The World AIDS Campaign Chairperson, Allyson Leacock added, “The Human Rights theme is about us, about communities, about people like you and me and our governments making a commitment to honor and respect the dignity of the vulnerable and to those already living with HIV.”

Source: Royston Martin, World AIDS Campaign

# Lead, Empower, Deliver

## A Litany for World AIDS Day



Every year, World AIDS Day (December 1) is given a special theme to focus on. “Universal Access and Human Rights” is the theme for 2009. You are encouraged to adapt the following World AIDS Day litany to fit the theme that will be used at your church or in your community. While this litany was written for use in World AIDS Day services and events, it may be adapted for use at any time throughout the year.

**One:** Compassionate God, we pray on this World AIDS Day with gratitude for your love that affirms the dignity and worth of each and every person. We give thanks that you empower and encourage us in the struggle to stop HIV.

**Many: Bless us with the courage and wisdom to ensure universal access to prevention, treatment, care and support for all those living with and affected by HIV and AIDS in our country and throughout the world.**

**One:** We pray for the millions of children who are so profoundly affected by this disease; the millions of children who are HIV positive, the orphans, and all those who are vulnerable and at risk.

**Many: May the example of Jesus’ care and concern for children inspire our deepest conviction and strongest commitments to children. Help us to ensure the treatment and care which is vital to their health and wholeness.**

**One:** We pray for women; for HIV positive mothers who are constantly seeking accurate information and treatment in order to prevent the spread of HIV; women who experience the injustices of inequality that reduce or deny them control over their own bodies; women who suffer from violence and abuse; all those who are vulnerable and at risk.

**Many: O God, grant them the courage they need. Help us to provide support and solidarity; strengthen our resolve, increase the capacity of our HIV prevention efforts, and guide our actions to work with others to address injustices and vigorously advance gender equality.**

**One:** We remember that *all of us* are created in your image. In the words of the Psalmist, we are “fearfully and wonderfully made” (139:14). Yet, in many places throughout the world, the human rights of HIV-positive people—the right to health, nondiscrimination and equality—are not protected people.

**Many: May the vision of your beloved community stimulate our engagement and deepen our commitment to strengthen human rights so that economic status no longer determines access to health care; barriers are removed to comprehensive HIV prevention, treatment, care and support; and discrimination and inequality based on gender, gender identity or sexual orientation are eliminated.**

**One:** We pray for all those living with and affected by HIV and AIDS—our families, friends, partners, caregivers and each one of us. We pray especially for the millions of people who have died in the course of this pandemic, and the families and loved ones they have left behind.

[People may offer prayers and remembrances for family, friends and others.]

**One:** Hear our prayers, O God. On this day World AIDS Day and everyday send your healing Spirit, heal the broken places, restore your people and give us your peace. Bestow your wisdom and courage on every setting of your church, on every religious community, on *all* the people, leaders and nations of the world.

**All: We acknowledge we are *all* affected by HIV and AIDS. We look to you, O God, our way out of no way, trusting that you have provided all we need to achieve your mission; to live the promise to stop HIV. Through Jesus, our Savior, we pray. Amen.**

STOP AIDS.

World AIDS Day is observed each year, on December 1

LIVE THE PROMISE.



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## **Awareness, Awareness, Awareness!** ***Concientización, Concientización, Concientización!***

Consider these scenarios: a Hispanic/Latina minister serving as a bilingual prophetic voice for HIV/AIDS awareness in New York City, a Hispanic/Latina lay minister working with youth in a Puerto Rican Hospice caring for HIV/AIDS patients, writing a chain of e-mails and letters to the Puerto Rican governor to claim justice for those murdered because of whom they are.

These are just some of the many examples of raising awareness in the UCC - Iglesia Unida de Cristo - to network with one another to increase awareness of the actions needed when speaking truth to power; when companioning with those in need beyond their HIV/AIDS diagnosis, sexual orientation, skin color or native tongue; and for opening our hearts to human suffering.

As a Hispanic/Latina minister at Community of Hope, UCC (COH, UCC) in Tulsa, Oklahoma, I have learned how to become empowered against all of the circumstances around me. It is easy to write, however, not that easy to live out - especially when coming from a place of privilege. This predominantly Anglo church has learned to become ... to serve needs beyond the labels of society and the labels of discrimination. For the past 16 years, it has served individuals living with HIV/AIDS.

With support from a locally funded Kaiser Family grant, COH, UCC has put to action its *awareness ~ concientización* beyond labels. It is our caring and committed church members who make things happen. Our ministries include bilingual HIV/AIDS retreats, "Tables to Go" (angel food baskets for HIV/AIDS families), a support group "Wounded Healer" for those living with HIV/AIDS, an Angel Christmas tree for gifts for many more HIV/AIDS families, partnering with our National UCAN, and the Local Church Ministries initiative in brainstorming with actions that speak up against the silence, the stigma, and discrimination of our neighbors.

May this season of renewal remind us of the many ways your voice, my voice, and our voices - *nuestras voces* - can lift up, cheer up, and empower others for a world where each one of us is the maker, believer and doer for a more fair and just world - *mundo!*

*Rev. Lizette Merchán Pinilla*  
Community of Hope, UCC  
Tulsa, Oklahoma  
UCAN Leadership Team Member



The Tables to Go Team



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

Rights Here, Right Now

## Preparing for Vienna

Registration is now open for the XVIII International AIDS Conference (IAC) which will be held in Vienna, Austria, July 18-23, 2010. The theme for conference is "Rights Here, Rights Now," focusing on the vital role of human rights in responding effectively to the HIV pandemic. UCAN is participating in the conference through the Ecumenical Advocacy Alliance (EAA), which is coordinating a variety of multi-faith events, including a one-day pre-conference the day before the conference begins, and activities during the conference, including a session on faith and human rights, a multi-faith exhibit and a multi-faith networking zone in the Global Village. UCAN has provided leadership and input to the development of these events and will also help to host the faith-based caucus meeting during the conference. More information about the IAC go to: [www.aids2010.org](http://www.aids2010.org). More Information and online registration for the multi-faith preconference will be available soon at <http://www.e-alliance.ch/en/s/hivaid/>.



### SOS-Spiritual Outreach Services

*(Continued from page 1)*

and referrals for medical and other key services to a Chinese Buddhist Center, a mosque, and several churches reaching thousands of people."

ASC and UCAN have learned key lessons in how to deliver on the promise of increased care and services to communities of faith affected strongly by HIV/AIDS. Four key ingredients define the SOS model:

First, a champion or advocate from within the faith community must introduce the AIDS service organization (ASO) to houses of worship, bringing ASO and congregation leaders together to explore the best design and implementation of program services, tailored to the specific house of worship. Oliver Martin has been this champion for ASC and SOS.

Second, there has to be willingness on the part of the house of worship to open its doors to the delivery of HIV and AIDS programs and services.

Third, the ASO needs a dedicated administrator and program champion to navigate the relationship building between church and ASO. Sharen Duke and Brenda Starks-Ross, ASC's CEO and COO together worked with Oliver Martin and the Program Committee of ASC's Board of Directors to create the title and concept of Spiritual Outreach Services, upholding the benefits of a secular-faith partnership to expand existing programs beyond traditional outreach strategies.

Fourth, the ASO needs to integrate, support and empower Peer Educators to deliver the HIV prevention information and services in the houses of worship. SOS Peer Educators at ASC have completed a core capacity-building skills training – ASC's Peer Recovery Education Program (PREP) – that emphasizes "peer mentoring" to help others initiate and maintain healthy behaviors. For many peer graduates, spirituality is a central component of their personal identity and sustained recovery. SOS is an opportunity for these Peers to do HIV prevention in churches, mosques, synagogues, and other settings.

Now is the time to bring ASOs and communities of faith *together* to the table to address this epidemic. "I'm proud to be part of SOS," Martin said. "Together we are changing old perceptions of stigma and shame associated with AIDS among people of faith. My hope for SOS is that one day it will put everybody in the AIDS field out of work and close the HIV/AIDS industry down."

**AIDS Service Center NYC (ASC)** is a community-based non-profit at the forefront of the fight against HIV/AIDS and the effort to ensure that all New Yorkers have access to HIV testing, treatment and care. ASC fulfills its mission of *helping many, one by one* by providing culturally relevant programs that help individuals and families maintain health and optimism in the face of HIV/AIDS. ASC has three Community Centers in New York City's Union Square, East Harlem, and Lower East Side.



## 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](http://www.ucaninc.org)

**Or, send checks to:**  
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Spring/Summer 2009-2010

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## UCAN's Mission Statement

**T**he 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.