



THE AIDS INSTITUTE

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THE AIDS INSTITUTE URGES COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT IN BLACK CHURCH WEEK OF PRAYER FOR THE HEALING OF AIDS

Washington, DC – In a statement to the The AIDS Institute’s faith program, United Faith Action Network (UFAN), James Sykes, of The AIDS Institute urged “All communities of faith to join in activities related to the **Black Church Week of Prayer for the Healing of AIDS**”, beginning this Sunday March 4 through March 10, 2007.”

Sykes further stated, "This week of prayer, sponsored by the Balm in Gilead, has the potential for tremendous impact to raise awareness about how HIV/AIDS has devastated people of color, our families, and faith communities. Along with the rest of the nation and the world, The AIDS Institute encourages all people of faith to pray for our healing from this epidemic; and for all people to work together to end AIDS. To these ends The AIDS Institute will continue to mobilize its grassroots faith network, UFAN, for domestic and global prevention, care, and research priorities."

As reported by the CDC, African Americans account for half of the estimated new HIV/AIDS cases in the United States. Sykes noted that “the Black church continues to play a pivotal role in the daily lives of African Americans. With this said, the Black church can be viewed as one of the most powerful tools to aid in the transformation of the affect of HIV/AIDS on this community.”

Now in its 18th year, The Black Church Week of Prayer for the Healing of AIDS is a powerful week of prayer, education and action according to The Balm in Gilead website at www.balmingilead.org. This national AIDS awareness campaign engages Black congregations to support, encourage and empower African Americans, Africans and all people of the Diaspora to take action toward stopping the spread of HIV/AIDS in Black communities worldwide. HIV/AIDS continues to spread out of control in our community. African American women are disproportionately affected by HIV/AIDS. As such, HIV/AIDS is the leading cause of death among African American women ages 25 to 34. The rate of AIDS cases for African American women is 25 times higher than the rate for White women. The awareness week organizers are looking for every pulpit that speaks to Black people to raise their voices and encourage people to speak out about HIV/AIDS in the following ways:

1. Educate our congregations, our children, our neighbors and our families about this disease. There is no cure. All we continue to have are prevention messages and behaviors;
2. Distribute information on HIV/AIDS prevention, treatment education and care;
3. Encourage individuals to take the HIV/AIDS test. So many of us are living with the virus that causes HIV/AIDS and do not know it. Thus, we are spreading the virus unknowingly to our wives, husbands, lovers, friends, as well as to strangers;
4. Develop partnerships with the local health department and/or AIDS service community that will support your HIV testing and information distribution efforts;
5. Affirm people living with HIV as children of God who have been certified by God’s grace –just as all members are affirmed.

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For more information and to become involved in AIDS advocacy work, please contact The AIDS Institute at: (202) 835-8373, or by email at: Info@theaidsinstitute.org or www.TheAIDSInstitute.org

The AIDS Institute is a nonprofit agency that promotes action for social change through public policy research, advocacy and education.