

HIV and The Black Church



The response from the faith community to HIV/AIDS is "the largest, most complex and wide-ranging response in the history of the epidemic."

Rev. Kenneth South

The HIV Crisis in Black America

- **1 in 16 Black men** will be diagnosed with HIV infection at some point in their lifetime
- **1 in 30 Black women** will be diagnosed with HIV infection at some point in their lifetime
- HIV maintains its place among the **top 10 leading causes of death** for Black males ages 10-64, and women ages 15-64
- **Black youth account for more than half of HIV infections** among youth ages of 13-24.

The Faithful Response to HIV

American faith communities have launched the single largest US response in the history of the HIV/AIDS epidemic. Nationwide, in 1999, 1 out of 4 AIDS service organizations are operated by separate religious institutions.

The AIDS epidemic cannot be defeated without the intentional and engagement and participation of African American congregations.

Pernessa C. Seele

The HIV Crisis in Black America

Over one million people are currently living with HIV/AIDS in the United States. African Americans face the most severe burden of HIV in the US.

While Blacks represent thirteen percent (13%) of the US population, by the end of 2007, Blacks accounted for almost half (46%) of the people living with a diagnosis of HIV infection.

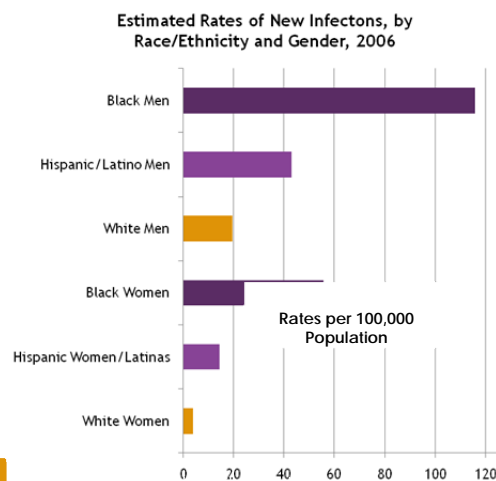
In 2006, Blacks accounted for nearly half (45%) of new infections in the 50 states and the District of Columbia.

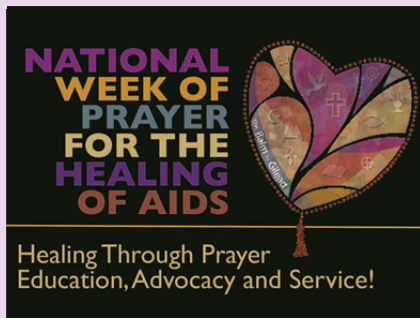
In addition, Black men accounted for two-thirds of new infection (65%) among all Blacks. Black men who have sex with men (MSM) represent 63% of new infections among all Black men, and 35% among all MSM.

The rate of new HIV infections for Black men is 6 times higher than that of white men and nearly 3 times that of

Hispanic/Latino men, and twice that of Black Women.

In that same year, the rate of new HIV infections for Black women was nearly 15 times higher than that of white women and nearly 4 times that of Hispanic/Latina women.





- **Promote special HIV Awareness Campaigns** such as the
 - National Week of Prayer for the Healing of AIDS
 - Our Faith Lights the Way
 - Aging and HIV/AIDS Awareness Day
 - World AIDS Day,
 - African American AIDS Awareness Day,
 - National HIV Testing Day
- **Distribute HIV educational materials** in the church bulletins, offices, and fellowship halls
- **Invite a speaker/minister** who is an HIV positive person to speak or preach at your church
- **Conduct sick and shut in visits or serve communion** to people living with HIV. Bring along flowers from services, funerals, and special events
- **Establish a support group**
- **Expand existing ministries**, such as the women's; men's, children and youth; feeding; and parish nurse ministries, to address specific areas or challenges related to HIV/AIDS
- **Address HIV in the context of other church outreach efforts** such as domestic violence, drug and alcohol, homeless, and prison prevention
- **Develop a respite program** for caregivers of those living with HIV
- **Host an HIV Testing event.** Register your church to participate in "Our Faith Lights the Way: A National Faith-based HIV Testing Campaign to receive a toolkit. In the toolkit is important information churches can use to organize HIV testing in the community

There are so many ways you can help.

Contact The Balm In Gilead for more information

The Church as a Balm

The Black Church is considered by people as one of the most important institutions in the Black community. In the Black Church, people, spanning all socioeconomic, age, and gender groups, gather regularly. In one gathering one can be fed spiritually, emotionally, mentally, and physically.

The Black church has an intricate social system and networks, and is strategically positioned to play a major role in the fight to reduce, and eventually stop, the spread of HIV.

Since 1989, The Balm In Gilead has worked with the Black faith institutions to reduce stigma, develop HIV and/or health ministries, educate the community, form effective community partnership, and serve people infected and the many friends and families affected by HIV/AIDS.

Being diagnosed with HIV infections once was thought to be a death sentence. A church educated about HIV can be a have to experience the power of faith, service, knowledge put to use, and life.

Across the country, tens of thousands of Black churches committed their leaders and congregants to be a balm in their communities, states, and across the nation.

Have you made that commitment today?



Bishops and the Missionary Supervisor at the Annual Christian Methodist Episcopal Convocation taking an HIV Antibody Test

