



Growing
Communities of
Inclusion: A Faithful
Response to HIV

COMPILED BY THE NORTH CAROLINA
COUNCIL OF CHURCHES
PARTNERS IN HEALTH AND WHOLENESS
PROGRAM

A six-week study guide on HIV for People of Faith

COMPILED BY THE NORTH CAROLINA COUNCIL OF
CHURCHES
PARTNERS IN HEALTH AND WHOLENESS PROGRAM



Partners in
HEALTH
and
WHOLENESS

AN INITIATIVE OF THE
NORTH CAROLINA COUNCIL OF CHURCHES

About the North Carolina Council of Churches

The Council enables denominations, congregations and people of faith to individually and collectively impact our state on issues such as economic justice and development, human well-being, equality, compassion and peace; following the example and mission of Jesus Christ.

27 Horne St.
Raleigh, NC 27607
(919) 828-6501
www.ncchurches.org



North Carolina Council of Churches
Strength in Unity, Peace through Justice

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Preface

It has been 41 years since HIV/ AIDS (human immunodeficiency virus/ acquired immunodeficiency syndrome) was first discovered in 1981(1). Since that first discovery, there have been many advancements in detecting and treating HIV. These developments have improved overall life quality for many living with HIV, extending life expectancy, and three people have been cured. Previously, we did not believe a cure was possible. However, despite these improvements, HIV is one of the most heavily stigmatized health topics. One of the most significant barriers to ending the HIV epidemic is stigma.

Faith Communities can help our larger communities eliminate stigma around HIV. Faith communities have tremendous opportunities to be agents of compassion, healing, hope, and peace. We have the chance to connect wholeness and hope to the generational impact of health concerns, including HIV/ AIDS. This is sacred work that God joins us in. Faith communities can begin conversations of compassion while fostering shared vulnerability and a culture of mutuality and support for people living with HIV.

For 85 years, the North Carolina Council of Churches has been fighting racism and working towards a more justice-centered society. Today this continues as we work toward a more compassionate response to the HIV epidemic. This study guide will help your congregation faithfully wrestle with these issues.

-The Partners in Health and Wholeness Team

1 <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC8153860/>

How to Use this Handbook

Throughout this resource, there are Reflection Questions that we hope invite reflection, whether individually or as a group. These questions act as prompts to consider your personal or shared/community experience around the impact of HIV/AIDS.

Other ways we hope this resource will be used:

- As a study guide when preparing to deliver a sermon or facilitate a discussion related to substance use and harm reduction.
- In preparation to lead your community through deciphering and understanding of information and misinformation about the opioid crisis.
- Organize an HIV study circle with your peers at your church, synagogue, mosque, or temple.
- Read one or more sections of the resource each week, and use the Reflection Questions to start the discussion.
- Work with the leadership at your place of worship to host an event, such as a roundtable discussion or a day-long conference on HIV and faith. In addition to reading and discussing this resource, invite speakers who live with HIV to speak from their lived experience.

- Read this resource with your place of worship, organization, or group of friends as you prepare to organize or participate in an action that supports people living with HIV or fair HIV public policy. See page --for ideas.

Several chapters offer additional resources under the heading "Read, Visit, Watch." These lists are by no means exhaustive, but they should give you a good start.

Terms in bold are defined in the Glossary of Terms on page -- Additionally, the appendix has prayers and other worship resources and a timeline of HIV research and information about safer sex practices.



- For more information and information about Faith Communities talking about HIV visit the Partners in Health and Wholeness youtube page
- https://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PLSFD_5o_PT-c2kYrgqCLkft9HjLZSEd8U

HEALTH AND WHOLENESS
A COMMITMENT TO THE WELL-BEING OF ALL

FRIDAY JAN. 28
11 AM

SACRED CONVERSATIONS:
Women and HIV

Join us on Jan. 28th for the next in our series of Sacred Conversations: **Women and HIV**. According to the Office of Women's Health "One in four people living with HIV in the United States is a woman." Learn what living with HIV looks like for women and how faith communities can get involved.

Courtney Colala Assistant Professor at the East Carolina University College of Nursing.

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WEBSITE: [HTTP://WWW.NCCCHURCHES.ORG/](http://www.nccchurches.org/)

HEALTH AND WHOLENESS
A COMMITMENT TO THE WELL-BEING OF ALL

FRIDAY OCT. 22
11 AM

SACRED CONVERSATIONS:
Stigma

We will define stigma, look at how stigma impacts our health and faith, and name ways to eliminate stigma. This conversation will equip our health ministries with language that can save lives!

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HEALTH AND WHOLENESS
A COMMITMENT TO THE WELL-BEING OF ALL

Sacred Conversations

HARM REDUCTION AND HIV

Join us to learn about how harm reduction and HIV are connected. We will learn about different ways congregations can get involved in this important work.

FRIDAY, JUNE 3
11AM-NOON
Register for Zoom Info

HEALTH AND WHOLENESS
A COMMITMENT TO THE WELL-BEING OF ALL

WEDNESDAY APRIL 6 11AM-12:00PM

**Faith Health Connection:
A Day in the life of an HIV Positive Youth**

Join us for this webinar to learn about youth's unique barriers while trying to navigate the HIV health care continuum. We will walk through the HIV health care continuum and how each pillar presents challenges for youth and how faith communities can get involved in eliminating these barriers.

Follow us: @HealthandWholeness
@PartnersInHealthandWholeness
<https://www.nccchurches.org/programs/pwh/>

HEALTH AND WHOLENESS
A COMMITMENT TO THE WELL-BEING OF ALL

FRIDAY DEC. 10
11 AM

SACRED CONVERSATIONS:
HIV 101

According to the Southern Aids Coalition, the South has 52% of the undiagnosed HIV infections in the United States. Learn what HIV looks like in NC and how faith communities can get involved. Harding is a Public Health Practitioner has spent 25 years assessing, planning, implementing, and evaluating local, regional, and state community health programs in Communicable Diseases.

Cecilia J. Harding Data in Action Program Manager for NC Division of Public Health, Communicable Disease Branch

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WEBSITE: [HTTP://WWW.NCCCHURCHES.ORG/](http://www.nccchurches.org/)

Chapter 1: Introduction/History of HIV- impact on the south

In June of 1981, there was an article released in *Morbidity and Mortality Weekly Report* by the CDC that documents what was called a “rare form of a lung infection(1)” specifically in five “previously healthy gay” men(2). This article is the first documentation of what is now known as HIV(HIV stands for *human immunodeficiency virus* and, if left untreated, can lead to Acquired immunodeficiency syndrome or AIDS) epidemic in the United States. In the first years of the crisis, there was not a lot of information about what causes HIV or AIDS. Due to this lack of knowledge, there was a lot of fear which then turned into stigma about LGBTQ+ people and HIV. In addition to the fear, many practices, which we now know as harm reduction, came into being to reduce people’s risk of contracting HIV. This included safe sex practices like using condoms and safer injection practices for people who use drugs.

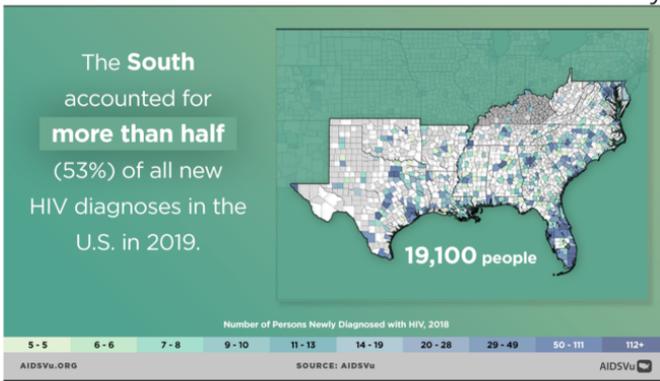
According to the CDC, since the first report in *Morbidity and Mortality Weekly Report*, more than 700,000 have died due to HIV-related illnesses. There are currently 1.2 million people living with HIV in the US. In the 40 years since HIV was first documented, we have learned much more about the virus and how to treat it. We now have the medicine to treat HIV so that people living with HIV are undetectable and can not transmit the virus to others. “When taken as prescribed, HIV medications can decrease the amount of HIV present in a person’s blood, or “HIV viral load”, to be too low to measure. This is called being undetectable. Being undetectable prevents HIV disease from progressing and allows people to live long and healthy lives. It also protects the health of their sex partners.(3)” (Minnesota Department of Health, 2022). This is also known as “Undetectable = Untransmittable (U=U)”.

1.<https://www.hiv.gov/blog/june-5-honoring-resilience-those-who-have-paved-way>
2 abid
3<https://www.health.state.mn.us/diseases/hiv/prevention/uu/index.html#:~:text=When%20taken%20as%20prescribed%2C%20HIV,live%20long%20and%20healthy%20lives.>

Can you think of other times in our history where society did not know a lot about a health crisis from lack of research or accessible information?

What were the general responses to that?

Celebrities have even come out in recent years about their HIV status to try to raise awareness and dispel a lot of the myths that have stayed around since the beginning of the crisis. Despite these advancements, there are more than 35,000 new infections each year(1). Right now, the CDC says that these new infections are disproportionately affecting specific populations, particularly racial and ethnic minorities, gay and bisexual men, and other men who have sex with men and transgender women. According to the Southern Aids Coalition, the South has 52% of the undiagnosed HIV infections in the United States. The next chapter will focus on what HIV looks like in North Carolina today.



(<https://aidsvu.org/resources/deeper-look-south/>)

Learn More !

Listen:

- [*Making Gay History Podcast*](#)

Visit:

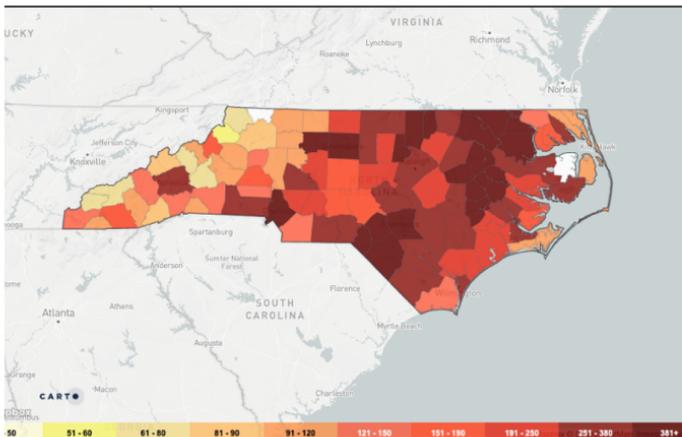
- [Southern Aids Coalition](#)
- [HIV.gov](#)
- [Kaiser Family Foundation HIV Basics](#)
- [Black Faith.org](#)

Watch:

- Update on HIV/AIDS in the American South - Faith Compass Coordinating Center Virtual Training
 - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XDHkEjm16Po>
- Sacred Conversations: HIV 101
 - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=AggrNygUUT0&t=2s>

1. <https://www.kff.org/hiv/aids/fact-sheet/the-hiv-aids-epidemic-in-the-united-states-the-basics/#:~:text=Today%2C%20there%20are%20more%20than,35%2C000%20new%20infections%20each%20year.&text=More%20than%20700%2C000%20people%20in,died%20from%20HIV%2Drelated%20illness.>

Chapter 2: HIV and NC today



(<https://aidsvu.org/local-data/united-states/south/north-carolina/>)

According to the North Carolina Department of Health and Human Services Epidemiology Department, as of December 31, 2021, people living with HIV reside in North Carolina (including those initially diagnosed in another state) were 35,632(1). Of those 72% are men and 28% are women according to AIDSvu.org(2). With our advances in treatment and prevention, our fellow North Carolinians can live long full lives with HIV. The state is even working on a plan to end the HIV Epidemic. The graphics below go on to more details about HIV in NC.

HIV Prevalence

Number of people living with HIV, 2018
31,864

Rate of people living with HIV per 100,000 population, 2018
364

Percent of people living with HIV, by Sex, 2018



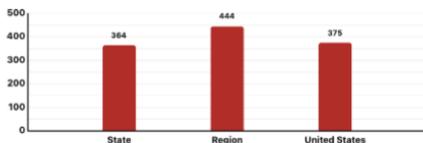
Percent of people living with HIV, by Race/Ethnicity, 2018



Percent of people living with HIV, by Age, 2018



Rate of people living with HIV per 100,000 population, by Geography, 2018



(<https://aidsvu.org/local-data/united-states/south/north-carolina/>)

What do you notice about North Carolina's trends related to HIV?

What parts of NC do the most people living with HIV live in?

- <https://epi.dph.ncdhhs.gov/cd/stds/figures/2021-HIV-AnnualReport.pdf>
- <https://aidsvu.org/local-data/united-states/south/north-carolina/>

HIV Prevalence Rate Ratios, by Race/Ethnicity, 2018



The rate of **Black males** living with an HIV diagnosis is 6.5 times that of **White males**.



The rate of **Hispanic/Latino males** living with an HIV diagnosis is 2.5 times that of **White males**.



The rate of **Black females** living with an HIV diagnosis is 13.9 times that of **White females**.



The rate of **Hispanic/Latina females** living with an HIV diagnosis is 3.6 times that of **White females**.

(<https://aidsvu.org/local-data/United-States/South/North-Carolina/>)

In August of 2021, the state of North Carolina released [the NC Ending HIV Ending the Epidemic plan](#). The plan has four pillars for ending the HIV epidemic in North Carolina. The graphic below is from the report and breaks down the main strategies.

Pillars and Strategies of North Carolina's Plan to end the HIV Epidemic

Engage and Embrace

- Improve access to antiretrovirals
- Normalize assessment and offer PrEP in all health settings
- Expand cultural humility training for all stakeholders

Test and Treat

- Expand & increase testing for HIV/STD/Viral Hepatitis in traditional and nontraditional settings
- Assure HIV/STI education for providers including anti-stigma education
- Social media campaign to promote HIV testing and prevention and reduce stigma

Policy and Promotion

- Statewide promotion of U=U campaign
- Promote youth-serving sexual health programs
- In partnership with NCAAN, raise awareness in the community and with key stakeholders on the benefit of closing the coverage gap

Each Strategy will include Action Steps that can be selected and acted upon, based upon local needs and priorities of the HIV community. Further details are outlined in each Pillar of the Plan, including Measurable Outcomes.

([https://epi.dph.ncdhhs.gov/cd/stds/docs/NC-Ending-HIV-Brochure\(English\)-Web.pdf](https://epi.dph.ncdhhs.gov/cd/stds/docs/NC-Ending-HIV-Brochure(English)-Web.pdf))

Faith Communities can connect their work into these pillars to increase education around PrEP, PEP, antiretroviral treatments, stigma reduction, normalizing testing as a health practice, and promoting policy that will decrease barriers for people living with HIV.

The next chapter will focus on stigma in particular and give you ideas on how your faith community can engage in stigma reduction work.

What is an example of a way a faith community can get involved with the "NC Ending the Epidemic Plan"?

Harm Reduction and HIV:

Harm reduction is any behavior or strategy that helps reduce risk or harm to yourself or others. This movement and public health strategy were developed during the early days of the HIV epidemic to keep people at high risk for contracting HIV. These strategies included safe sex practices, sterile injection supplies for people who use drugs. Today Harm Reduction is also a social justice movement advocating for the dignity and rights of people who use drugs.

Learn More!

Resources in NC:

- [NC AIDS Action Network](#)
- [Faith Compass Coordinating Center](#)
- [North Carolina Department of Health and Human Services Epidemiology](#)

Watch:

- [Community-based Solutions to HIV Cure's Ethical Challenges](#)
 - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mPCPktMIUJI>
- [Faith Health Connection: HIV Advocacy](#)
 - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2K5KeE-9hXs>

Chapter 3: Stigma

The Mayo Clinic defines stigma as: “Stigma is when someone views you in a negative way because you have a distinguishing characteristic or personal trait that's thought to be, or actually is, a disadvantage (a negative stereotype). Unfortunately, negative attitudes and beliefs toward people who have mental health conditions are common. Stigma can lead to discrimination.(1)” People living with HIV can face stigma based on their HIV status or perceptions as to why they are living with HIV. Stigma prevents people living with HIV from getting and receiving treatment or staying with that treatment. For instance, a person may not feel comfortable asking for support, or receiving medical assistance, due to stigma. Stigma is also a barrier from having widespread HIV testing and upfront educational conversations about the realities of HIV and how to prevent the spread of HIV.

Another aspect of stigma is internalized stigma, meaning a person applies negative attitudes, beliefs, and stereotypes to themselves. See the image below for examples of internalized HIV-related stigma.

Faith communities are called to build healthy communities. We can do this by eliminating stigma through stigma-reducing language, sharing our stories, having conversations about compassion and vulnerability.

What are other health concerns that are stigmatized?

Can you think of ways that stigma can be a barrier to care for people living with HIV?

Internalized HIV-related Stigma



Nearly 2 out of 3 say that it is difficult to tell others about their HIV infection.



Roughly 1 out of 3 report feeling guilty or ashamed of their HIV status.

<https://go.usa.gov/xnMzn>

Nearly 1 in 4 say that being HIV-positive makes them feel dirty or worthless.



(<https://go.usa.gov/xnMzn>)

Learn More

Watch:

- [Fight HIV Stigma through Access, Mobilization, and Equity](#)
 - https://www.ted.com/talks/allison_mathews_fight_hiv_stigma_through_access_mobilization_and_equity
- [Sacred Conversations: Stigma](#)
 - https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=molKv2dD_fl&t=3s
- [Faith and HIV in NC: Faith and Health Summit 2022](#)
 - https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6bHsUIDj_Q

Chapter 4: Ways to get Involved

In the first few chapters, we have discussed: the history of HIV, what HIV looks like across the South and in North Carolina, and stigma. In this chapter, we are going to look at a few ways your faith community can get involved around HIV work.

Stigma Reducing Language: We can reduce the stigma, and help save lives, just by changing our language. By doing so, we can reverse harmful stereotypes about HIV and improve access to care and support for people affected by this virus.

Words to Avoid	Words to Use
AIDS carrier	person living with HIV
AIDS- infected; HIV- infected; transmitters	Refer to people as being HIV- positive or a person/ people living with HIV
AIDS Orphans	orphans and other children made vulnerable by AIDS
AIDS virus; HIV virus	HIV There is no need to define, nor add the word “virus” after it.
At Risk of AIDS	Vulnerable to HIV
HIV/AIDS; HIV and AIDS	People living with HIV, HIV prevalence, HIV prevention, HIV response, HIV testing, HIV-related disease, AIDS diagnosis, children made vulnerable by AIDS, national AIDS program, AIDS service organization HIV epidemic
HIV Patient Positive or HIVers HIV Carrier	Person Living with HIV
Died of AIDS To die of AIDS	Died of AIDS related illness, AIDS related complications or end stage of HIV
Full Blown AIDS	There is no medical definition for this phrase simply use the term AIDS or Stage 3 HIV
Unprotected Sex	Condom less sex with PrEP, Condom less sex <u>with out</u> PrEP
Contaminated or Infected	Person living with HIV (Never use the term infected when referring to a person)

Testing: Host a community-wide testing event. Check with your local board of health to determine if prior training and/or certification for your ministry members is required. Or partner with your local health department and have them do the testing.

Host a Support Group at your Faith Community for people living with HIV: According to Mental Health America “Support groups are offered as a space where individuals can come together to share their stories, experiences, and lives in a way that helps reduce isolation and loneliness. Oftentimes, we think we are struggling alone, but support groups help us see that there are others who may be dealing with similar situations and who in turn can help us get better.(1)” If your faith community has space that isn't being used during the week, offer it up as a support group to help people in your community.

Host a supply drive: Faith Communities are experts in organizing supply drives or food collections for their local community. Try organizing a supply drive for your Local HIV organization, LGBTQ advocacy organization, or Harm Reduction group. Invite organizations to come to a service and explain what the donations help with.

Presenting facts and myth-busting: Does your church have an adult Sunday school class or a coffee hour to talk about topics going on in the world? If so, maybe use that time to talk about facts about HIV and do some myth-busting about it.

Story Sharing: Stories are a powerful way to break down stigma. Set a side time for people in the congregation to talk about how stigma has impacted their lives. Invite people living with HIV to share their stories as well.

1.<https://www.mhanational.org/find-support-groups>

Teach clergy and lay leaders to learn how to create a safe space: Have a conversation with your church and the broader community about how to have a welcoming and inclusive space for everyone but specifically for people living with HIV. This could be done through small facilitated circle sessions with opportunities to share their own experiences with stigma with one another and reflect on how the church could eliminate that stigma.

What are other examples of ways your faith community can get involved around HIV?



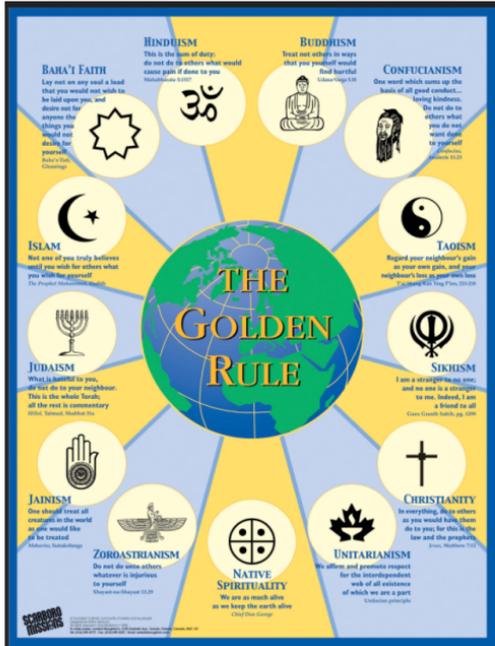
Learn More

Visit:

- Black Faith and HIV
 - <https://blackfaith.org/>
- NATIONAL FAITH HIV/AIDS AWARENESS DAY toolkit
 - <https://drive.google.com/file/d/1aIPKux0shZCYEmMIb05aE3YOscIT64F7/view?fbclid=IwAR30nf7Mklr4mr-x4jfqR-Qoq8CeZFXYPs-B0FrAlKnaLM1BkQPm-GXjg5w>
- Establishing HIV and Faith Partnerships Throughout the US South: Faith Health Summit 2022
 - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xG3TwrNVRVc>

Chapter 5: HIV a Faithful Perspective

In previous chapters, we have discussed HIV in a historical context and ways to get your faith community involved. Now we are looking at how we can connect HIV to our faith and find inspiration in the Bible.



Example 1: Almost every religion has a concept similar to the Christian golden rule of “Do to others as you would have them do to you” [Matthew 7:12]. This rule commands us to see the humanity in our fellow humans and treat them with dignity and respect, which aligns with the philosophy of Harm Reduction and how we should treat our brothers and sisters living with HIV.

Example 2: Am I my brother’s keeper? [Genesis 4:8-13] This passage in Genesis challenges us to think about what responsibilities are to our brothers and sisters. Like the golden rule, it commands us to see each other’s humanity and go past treating each other with dignity and respect to care for each other.

Example 3: Jesus told the disciples to meet him in the area of Galilee where no one wanted to go, and that is what we have to do – go and address the issues where others will not go. [Matthew 28] As followers of Jesus, we are challenged to love and welcome people who society pushes to the side. Matthew 28 is a call for us to eliminate stigma for people living with HIV.

What are other examples of stories from the bible that connect faith and HIV?

Are there examples from other faith traditions that are not Christian?

Learn More

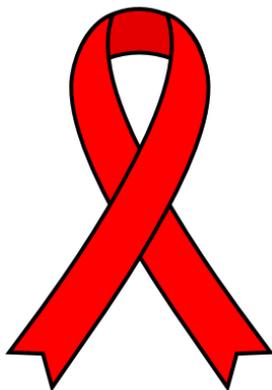
Visit:

- Faith Compass Coordinating Center at Wake Forrest University
 - <https://divinity.wfu.edu/compass-initiative-faith-coordinating-center/>
- The Black Church and HIV
 - <https://blackfaith.org/>
- Responding to the Call: A Guide to HIV/AIDS Education in Faith Communities
 - <https://www.health.ny.gov/publications/9256.pdf>

Chapter 6: Conclusion

Over the past five weeks, you have read and discussed: History of HIV, HIV in NC, Stigma, and HIV a faithful perspective. HIV affects our communities, our neighbors, and families. As we have learned from history, if we continue to stigmatize people living with HIV, we are doomed to lose more people to the preventable disease.

Now is the time for us to break the cycle. In the short term, we need to reflect on what our place is in ending HIV and HIV-related stigma. How will you get involved? How will you engage your faith community? It can be as simple as incorporating stigma-reducing language or organizing a testing site, or hosting a support group for people living with HIV. These acts demonstrate love and help us tackle the HIV crisis in front of us.



In the long term, we, as a society, need to tackle stigma and end HIV. There are many reasons we are in the HIV crisis we are in now, but the largest is stigma. Stigma is a barrier to treatment, safer sex practices, preventive medicine, and medical care-the list goes on.

Take Action!

There are many things that you can do to help with the HIV epidemic and to support people living with HIV. Here are some ideas:

Education

- Preach a sermon on HIV and stigma reduction
- Have a naming ceremony to lift up the names of those who have been affected by HIV/AIDS
- Teach a Sunday school class or small group on HIV
- Host an event on HIV at your house of worship
- Offer a resource table at your place. You can do many things of worship about local resources for HIV treatment and prevention.

Service/Ministry

- form a congregational partnership with your local harm reduction group or HIV task force, a similar organization
- Attend worship at a congregation or other organization that works with HIV-related organizations
- Host a community meal at your house of worship that includes people living with HIV, and make sure its a space where all are welcome to share
- Visit an HIV advocacy organization or treatment provider to learn more about the work they do.

Political/Public Action

- Work to expand Medicaid in your state so that all people have access to health insurance.
- Work to eliminate laws in your state that criminalize HIV
 - For more information visit <https://www.cdc.gov/hiv/policies/law/states/exposure.html>
 - <https://www.hivlawandpolicy.org/sourcebook>
- Get connected with you local HIV/AIDS advocacy group

Glossary of Terms

HIV: According to HIV.gov, "human immunodeficiency virus is a virus that attacks cells that help the body fight infection, making a person more vulnerable to other infections and diseases. It is spread by contact with certain bodily fluids of a person with HIV, most commonly during unprotected sex (sex without a condom or HIV medicine to prevent or treat HIV), or through sharing injection drug equipment."

AIDS: Acquired immunodeficiency syndrome (AIDS) is the late stage of HIV infection that occurs when the body's immune system is badly damaged because of the virus. However, if someone is diagnosed with HIV, they can be on medication to avoid developing AIDS.

PrEP: PrEP is a prevention method used by HIV-negative people and at high risk for being exposed to HIV through sexual contact or injection drug use. When someone is exposed to HIV through sex or injection drug use, these medicines can keep the virus from establishing an infection.

Pep: PEP refers to the use of antiretroviral drugs for HIV-negative people after a single high-risk exposure to stop HIV infection. PEP must be started as soon as possible to be effective – always within 72 hours of potential exposure.

U=U or Undetectable=Untransmittable: According to the National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Diseases, "U=U means that people with HIV who achieve and maintain an undetectable viral load—the amount of HIV in the blood—by taking antiretroviral therapy (ART) daily as prescribed cannot sexually transmit the virus to others. Thus, treatment for HIV is a powerful arrow in the quiver of HIV prevention tools.

ART: Antiretroviral therapy is the combination of medicines that a person living with HIV takes daily to treat HIV and ensure that a person cannot sexually transmit the virus.

Harm Reduction: Harm reduction is a set of practical strategies and ideas aimed at reducing negative consequences associated with drug use. Harm Reduction is also a movement for social justice built on a belief in, and respect for, the rights of people who use drugs.



THE BLACK CHURCH & HIV THE SOCIAL JUSTICE IMPERATIVE



Addressing HIV In Your Church Year-Round Engage YOUR Ministry

January

- **Engage** your Ministerial Team and Staff Leadership around HIV as a social justice issue.
- Download the Pastoral Brief and Activity Manual and discuss key points during one of your leadership meetings.

February

National Black HIV/AIDS Awareness Day (February 7)

- Declare that your Place of Worship is a "Safe Space."
- Use **National Black HIV/AIDS Awareness Day** as an opportunity to engage and empower your entire congregation, preaching about HIV as a social justice issue.
- Let your Congregation know that you are joining the fight by ending:
 - Stigmatization
 - Shame
 - Silence

March

National Women and Girls HIV/AIDS Awareness Day (March 10)

National Week of Prayer for the Healing of AIDS (Visit <http://www.balmingilead.org/nwpha/> for annual date)

- Engage your Prayer Ministry in the first week of March and undergird your efforts in prayer during the **National Week of Prayer for the Healing of HIV and AIDS**.
- Engage your Women's Ministry for **National Women and Girls HIV/AIDS Awareness Day** by inviting someone living with HIV to speak to your Women's Group.
- Talk about issues associated with HIV.

April

National Youth HIV & AIDS Awareness Day (April 10)

- Engage your Youth and College Ministry by inviting someone living with HIV to speak to your Youth Group.
- Begin a dialogue around what is a healthy relationship.
- Talk about issues associated with HIV.

May

Wedding Season

- Engage your Spiritual Care and Counseling Teams.
- Have your Marriage Ministry ask soon-to-be couples if they have had a recent HIV test together. Your local board of health department should be able to give you more information about Partner Testing.

June

National HIV Testing Day (June 27)

- Engage your Health and Wellness Ministry in a community wide testing event. (Check with your local board of health to determine if prior training and/or certification for your Ministry Members is required.)



A joint Clinton Global Initiative Commitment to Action by the NAACP and Gilead Sciences, Inc. to end HIV in Black America. Funding is provided by Gilead Sciences, Inc.

<https://theblackchurchandhiv.org/>



THE BLACK CHURCH & HIV THE SOCIAL JUSTICE IMPERATIVE



July

Day of Unity (Third Sunday of July)

Continue the tradition of *The Black Church & HIV's* Day of Unity by committing to preach about HIV as a social justice issue.

August

National Faith & HIV Awareness Day (August 27)

- Engage your Men's Ministry by inviting someone living with HIV to speak to your Men's Group.
- Discuss issues associated with HIV and other health disparities, including prostate cancer.
- Participate locally in one of the many Interfaith activities throughout the country occurring for National Faith & HIV/AIDS Awareness Day (FaithAidsDay.org).

September

National HIV/AIDS and Aging Awareness Day (September 18)

- Engage your Seniors Ministry by inviting someone who is over 50 years old and living with HIV/AIDS to speak to your Seniors Group.
- Talk about issues associated with HIV.

October

- Engage your Singles Ministry around HIV by hosting an open dialogue and discussion on sex.
- Bring in professionals or expert who can interweave the facts around biblical principle.

December

World AIDS Day (December 1)

- Engage your Health and Wellness Ministry in a community wide testing event. (Check with your local board of health to determine if prior training and/or certification for your Ministry Members is required.)



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7 Steps to Addressing HIV/AIDS in the Black Church

Pastor John Faison, Sr.

As faith leaders, we can make a difference in the lives of our church and community by using the Word of God to raise awareness about health injustices and to help those living with HIV. HIV is a social justice issue, and for generations, the Black Church has been a leader for change in the Black community on issues of social inequality, including voting rights and employment opportunities. Today, we must harness the power of God's love as we put our faith into action and apply our tradition of social justice advocacy to the HIV epidemic.

Addressing HIV in churches can be challenging, but there are opportunities to take action and positively impact our communities. Below are seven steps I have used to incorporate HIV/AIDS awareness in my church that I hope you will utilize to spur change in your pews.

1. Educate Yourself on the Issue

Do your homework on the impact of HIV in your region to craft a focused message to your congregants. You can use AIDSvu.org to help you and your congregants visualize the HIV epidemic in your county. This resource will provide you with relevant HIV statistics and allow you to better understand the different social health deterrents that may be impacting your community. Additionally, you can check with your local health department for information on the epidemic, how it might be impacting your community, and what is currently being done to address it.

2. Know Your Church Context

Good messages communicated badly are received badly. You must shape messages to the interests of your congregation and communicate them in a method most appropriate in the best space and at the right time. By shaping your message and its delivery, you can create a more impactful and long-lasting impression.

Messages will look different in every church. The conversation surrounding HIV may begin from your pulpit, in evening bible studies, or in partnership with local community organizations.

3. Leverage Technology

Make the conversation interactive by using anonymous mobile surveys and social media as a platform for your advocacy.

Example: Use a mobile survey to ask congregants "Do you know anyone personally who is HIV positive?" during worship service. Results will vary depending on your church, but typically, congregants will realize just how close-to-home the issue really is. This can demonstrate that HIV is not a discussion about "them" outside of the sanctuary; it's about "us" sitting in the sanctuary.

4. Maximize Partnerships

Utilize outside expertise by reaching out to community centers and health departments. You may even want to invite a health professional to come speak at your church. This gives the conversation credibility, but also lessens burden on the church. It will also work to build trust between medical providers and members of your community.



THE BLACK CHURCH & HIV THE SOCIAL JUSTICE IMPERATIVE



5. **Pastor, Lead from the Front**

GO FIRST! Set an example by getting tested for HIV and encouraging others to do the same. As faith leaders, our voices have power. Let it be our duty to model compassion for those impacted and end the stigma against our neighbors impacted by HIV.

6. **Learn the Systems that Feed Sickness**

HIV is a social justice issue that is heavily influenced by social determinants of health feeding inequity in our communities. Common examples include: access to education, access to healthcare, poverty, and mass incarceration. [Study](#) these social factors of inequity and understand how they impact your community with the help of [AIDSvu](#)'s resources.

7. **Pray Strategically**

When you tackle systemic evil, expect spiritual warfare. This work exposes painful areas in individuals and the community of faith.

Lead with prayer as we come together to end the stigma of HIV and fight the epidemic raging in our communities. Look to resources provided by The Black Church & HIV: The Social Justice Imperative initiative like the [Pastoral Brief and Activity Manual](#) for ideas on how to ease the conversation of HIV into your ministry.



Pastor John R. Faison, Sr. is the Senior Pastor of Watson Grove Baptist Church in Nashville, Tennessee, known as "The Grove," where they endeavor to be "A GROWING church for GROWING people whom Christ will use in GROWING His Kingdom." Pastor Faison can be reached at: pastor@thegrovenash.org



<https://theblackchurchandhiv.org/>



How to Incorporate HIV into a Sermon

We, as faith leaders, can make a difference in the lives of our church and community by using the resources available to us to raise awareness about health injustices and ways to stop the spread of HIV. One of the most important ways we can educate our congregation is from the pulpit. **The sermon is one of the most powerful parts of the worship service.**

As we know, the more we repeat a message the more impact it has. Just as we usually preach multiple sermons about salvation, forgiveness, miracles and love, we have to teach multiple times about the critical health issues that our community continues to face. HIV as a social justice issue is the message and the sermon is how we deliver it. **Integrating HIV messaging into your sermons is a powerful way to raise awareness and show your leadership and commitment to this social justice cause.** One key strategy is to include HIV in sermons that relate to health.

Below are some ideas for bringing HIV/AIDS in your sermons.

Potential Themes

- Am I my brother's keeper? **[Genesis 4:8-13]**
- Jesus lifted up the "other." We have to lift each other up. **[1 Thessalonians 5:10-12]**
- Jesus told the disciples to meet him in the area of Galilee where no one wanted to go and that is what we have to do – go and address the issues where others will not go. **[Matthew 28]**
- Jesus' command for us to love one another. **[John 13:34]**
- The Good Samaritan. Who is our neighbor? We have a responsibility to the marginalized. **[Luke 10:25- 37]**
- The man who brought his son for Jesus to heal. We have to bring those who are hurting to Jesus. **[John 4:43-54]**

Additional Scripture Inspirations

- **Amos 5:24 (MSG)**, "Do you know what I want? I want justice—oceans of it. I want fairness—rivers of it. That's what I want. That's all I want."
- **Isaiah 41:6**, "They helped everyone his neighbor; and every one said to his brother, 'Be of good courage.'"
- **Jeremiah 22:3 (MSG)**, "This is God's Message: Attend to matters of justice. Set things right between people. Rescue victims from their exploiters. Don't take advantage of the homeless, the orphans, the widows. Stop the murdering!"
- **John 14:12-14 (NIV)**, "Very truly I tell you, whoever believes in me will do the works that I have been doing, and they will do even greater things than these, because I am going to the Father. And I will do whatever you ask in my name, so that the Father may be glorified in the Son. You may ask for anything in my name, and I will do it."



- **John 9:1-7 (NIV)**, “As he went along, he saw a man blind from birth. His disciples asked him, ‘Rabbi, who sinned, this man or his parents, that he was born blind?’ ‘Neither this man nor his parents sinned,’ said Jesus, ‘but this happened so that the works of God might be displayed in him. As long as it is day, we must do the works of him who sent me. Night is coming, when no one can work. While I am in the world, I am the light of the world.’ After saying this, he spit on the ground, made some mud with the saliva, and put it on the man’s eyes. ‘Go,’ he told him, ‘wash in the Pool of Siloam’ (this word means “Sent”). So the man went and washed, and came home seeing.”
- **Like 6:37-38**, “Do not judge, and you will not be judged. Do not condemn, and you will not be condemned. Forgive, and you will be forgiven. Give, and it will be given to you. A good measure, pressed down, shaken together and running over, will be poured into your lap. For with the measure you use, it will be measured to you.”
- **Luke 4:18 (NIV)**, “The Spirit of the Lord is on me, because he has anointed me to proclaim good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim freedom for the prisoners and recovery of sight for the blind, to set the oppressed free.”
- **Mark 2:1-9 (NIV)**, “A few days later, when Jesus again entered Capernaum, the people heard that he had come home. They gathered in such large numbers that there was no room left, not even outside the door, and he preached the word to them. Some men came, bringing to him a paralyzed man, carried by four of them. Since they could not get him to Jesus because of the crowd, they made an opening in the roof above Jesus by digging through it and then lowered the mat the man was lying on. When Jesus saw their faith, he said to the paralyzed man, ‘Son, your sins are forgiven.’ Now some teachers of the law were sitting there, thinking to themselves, ‘Why does this fellow talk like that? He’s blaspheming! Who can forgive sins but God alone?’ Immediately Jesus knew in his spirit that this was what they were thinking in their hearts, and he said to them, ‘Why are you thinking these things? Which is easier: to say to this paralyzed man, ‘Your sins are forgiven,’ or to say, ‘Get up, take your mat and walk?’”
- **Matthew 23:23 (NIV)**, “Woe to you, teachers of the law and Pharisees, you hypocrites! You give a tenth of your spices—mint, dill and cumin. But you have neglected the more important matters of the law— justice, mercy and faithfulness. You should have practiced the latter, without neglecting the former.”
- **Matthew 25:45 (KJV)**, “... Inasmuch as ye did it not to one of the least of these, ye did it not to me.”
- **Micah 6:8 (MSG)**, “But he’s already made it plain how to live, what to do, what God is looking for in men and women. It’s quite simple: Do what is fair and just to your neighbor, be compassionate and loyal in your love, And don’t take yourself too seriously — take God seriously.”
- **Psalms 27:14**, “Wait on the LORD: be of good courage, and he shall strengthen thine heart: wait, I say, on the LORD.”

Hospitality for people who are living with HIV...

- * a moral act
- * resistance
- * life-giving and life-sustaining
- * reciprocity
- * restorative
- * transformative
- * deep listening
- * mutual sharing of lives and stories
- * openness of heart
- * compassion
- * generosity of time and resources
- * willingness to make one's life visible to others
- * welcome, rest, and promise of reception
- * a personal pursuit and a collective action
- * a way to transcend borders/boundaries
- * essentially rooted in harm reduction
- * explicitly non-judgmental
- * stigma free and committed to eradicating stigma
- * has different meanings in different locations (health center, CBO, church, etc.)
- * invites people in to places they may not otherwise go
- * points to a different system of valuing and alternate models of relationships
- * invites people in as well as outreaches
- * meets people where they are at
- * humanizes the drugs issue
- * universalizes the neighbor and particularizes the stranger
- * recognizes dignity as well as need
- * stands with and for
- * provides physical, social and spiritual nourishment
- * is pragmatic
- * is knowledgeable about the issues people impacted by drugs face
- * is access to low threshold and life-saving resources
- * is connection
- * is ultimately shaped by people who use drugs
- * sees the Divinity in each person
- * anticipates God's hospitality
- * is a concrete expression of Love

Questions/Topics for Discussion...

How does the community/how do people who live with HIV know that they are welcome and wanted? (or are they?) (are there conditions?)

How can we strengthen hospitality for people who live with HIV/their loved ones here? in this moment? in our wildest dreams? what would inclusion look like?

What are the barriers to growing hospitality offerings for communities impacted by HIV? drug use? sex work? in a congregational setting

What are the challenges and opportunities for the congregation?

How can congregations be moved around complex issues such as HIV? substance use? sex work?

What are the next steps to becoming more informed on the topic of HIV? drug/drug policy related harm?

What can we do now, as a community or person of faith, to engage the HIV crisis in our communities/my communities?

**Today is World AIDS Day. We offer this prayer from the
United Church of Canada.**

**God, open our eyes to the systems around us that oppress,
hold down, and disadvantage the most vulnerable in our
society,**

**so that we may increase and abound in our love for one
another and for all people.**

**God, open our ears to the myths, stereotypes, and lies that
keep these systems going,**

**so that we may increase and abound in our love for one
another and for all people.**

**God, open our mouths to challenging conversations about
race, sex, and differences,**

**so that we may increase and abound in our love for one
another and for all people.**

**God, open our hearts to the understanding that we are all
affected by HIV/AIDS,**

**so that we may increase and abound in our love for one
another and for all people.**

<https://www.umcjustice.org/news-and-stories/a-prayer-for-world-aids-day-580>

Catholic Health Association:

God of Promise, today we are mindful of our sisters and brothers suffering with HIV and AIDS. We ask your healing presence on millions of people living with the disease today; particularly the children who are infected or who have been orphaned by the disease. Make of us a safe haven for those who are abandoned, discriminated against and rejected on account of their illness. Inspire us to speak out for a just distribution of health care and medical aid in this country and for generosity in sharing our resources with those struggling under the weight of this epidemic overseas.

https://www.chausa.org/docs/default-source/prayers/world-aids-day-2017-december-151ae95f4dff26ff58685ff00005b1bf3.pdf?sfvrsn=6b5cfaf2_0

Prayer for People Living with HIV/AIDS Rev. Kerolos

Saleib UMC

Let us pray.

My soul pleads for mercy, my heart is saddened by the stigma and discrimination around me, against me, and in me.

Who will listen as I scream? Who will see my tears? No one but you, Oh God. My source of strength, you have chosen me.

You have seen my weakness and strength.

Let your voice bring hope from the highest mountain top.

Let your spirit take over me.

HIV has taken over my blood, but it has not taken my spirit away.

It has not taken my joy away. It has not taken my voice away.

Instead God has entrusted me to be the voice. Lord, you know I will fall. You know I will stumble along the way.

You know my heart's desires. You know my heart's temptations. You know my thoughts and my every step.

Pick me up when I fall. Feed me when I am hungry. Quench me when I am thirsty. Clothe me when I am naked.

Love will overcome HIV. Love will be my source of strength. Love is unconditional and with no limits. Love is food and a pure essence for the soul, the mind, and the spirit.

Love does not separate, discriminate, hate, or judge. Love taught me to embrace my disease, to bring life and hope to those who have lost it.

Together with love, we can overcome. Together with love, our voices will be heard. Together with love, we can end this epidemic. It is a promise!

RESOURCES

Health Ministry

Sample Church Announcement

You may consider inviting a person living with HIV to share their testimony before calling others to action for NFHAAD

Sample text:

What has God called you to do for social justice? Jesus was the manifestation of social justice and we are all called to be like Jesus. He treated all those around him, especially those who were socially marginalized, with fairness, generosity, compassion, and love. On August 29, in honor of National Faith HIV/AIDS Awareness Day, we challenge each of you to learn more about HIV/AIDS in our community, become advocates for social justice to end the HIV epidemic, and pray for the healing of all those affected by the epidemic.

Sample Activities for Health Ministry

- HIV education workshops for faith community and larger community
- Congregation-based HIV testing

Ways to Get More Involved as a Faith Community

- support candid institutional and community dialogue about sexual and reproductive health
- host HIV/AIDS discussions in settings outside of my faith gathering space
- create an HIV/AIDS ministry
- utilize social media outlets to reach community members with HIV/AIDS prevention and education messages
- engage the media (e.g., TV, radio, newspapers, magazines, blogs) in HIV/AIDS awareness
- work with other faith leaders on HIV/AIDS campaigns
- convene regular meetings of diverse, interfaith leaders to discuss HIV/AIDS

RESOURCES

Health Ministry

Sample Congregational Declaration Against HIV stigma¹⁰

Note: You can customize for your faith community.

- We resolve to discuss the issue in community gatherings;
- We agree to disclose our HIV status with the knowledge that we will have support from our community;
- We encourage all and their families to disclose HIV status when one has AIDS;
- We pledge to support, and never to gossip about or humiliate in any way, those who are known to have HIV/AIDS;
- We pledge to draw people living with HIV/AIDS close and to encourage them to live positively;
- The community will deal severely with anyone seen to discriminate against them;
- We will preach and pray about HIV/AIDS at church, in schools and in concerts;
- We will hold interfaith HIV/AIDS prayer services;
- We commit to use HIV/AIDS symbols in our workplaces as a visual sign of our unity and commitment (for example, on our clothes for work and church and school);



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RESOURCES

Liturgical Resources

Prayers

Example of a Muslim Prayer for NFHAAD

Prayer by Imam Daniel Hernandez¹¹ 

Petition/Intercessory Prayer for HIV/AIDS

Almighty God of all ways and all things, we come to you today in awe and praise. We know that you are the author of strength and the creator of every pathway toward justice.

We pray to you today, for all of those living with and impacted by HIV/AIDS. Lord, we ask that you provide them with the fortitude and endurance to persevere in a world that stigmatizes and ignores. God, we pray for their communities and families, that they can be a bedrock of care and support. God, we pray that our medical institutions and governments will persevere in discovering innovative and righteous solutions to help those impacted to continuously flourish while we work collectively to eradicate this disease.

Lastly, Lord, we ask that you give each of us the spiritual nourishment we need to do our part in transforming the story of HIV/AIDS and fostering a better world for generations to come.

We pray for all these things in your almighty power, Amen.

Healing Prayer for HIV/AIDS

Holy and steadfast one, we ask that you be a balm of physical, spiritual, and mental healing for our community. We especially ask that your care extend tremendously to people living with HIV/AIDS. We ask that you bless and nurture every relationship and resource that can help to mend our people and our communities. We pray for cures. We pray for medicines. We pray for mending. And most importantly, we pray for life more abundantly. We know that the seeds of good intentions we sow now, will bear fruit of greater impact later. And so we ask these things in the witness and presence of a magnificent universal power that transcends all we know and understand. Amen.

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RESOURCES

Liturgical Resources

Prayers

Litany of Confession for HIV/AIDS Justice

One: God of justice, love, and compassion

All: We come to you in confession of our shortcomings and ignorance of HIV/AIDS.

One: God who loves all without judgement, God who provides healing and new mercies everyday

All: We confess that, even in our faith, we have cast opinions and overlooked those in our community.

One: God of omnipotence and might, God of action and movement

All: We confess our stagnant nature and complacency. We know we can do more to destigmatize and end HIV/AIDS.

One: God of our evolution and transformation

All: We ask that you forgive our failings and lack of empathy. We ask that you equip us with the knowledge, understanding, and courage to do better on behalf of all people living with or impacted by HIV.

— Silence —

All: Be with us now, be with us always. This we pray. Amen.

RESOURCES

Liturgical Resources

Prayers

Litany for NFHAAD

One: God of sacred affirmation, we praise you for your abiding mercy and unwavering works.

All: For this we give thanks.

One: As we face and combat the stigmas and devastation of HIV/AIDS, we know you are with us every step of the journey.

All: For this we give thanks.

One: As we work to transform the story of HIV/AIDS in our faith communities, we know you give us voice and purpose.

All: For this we give thanks.

One: As we share resources and work collectively and collaboratively to end HIV for good, we know you have a hand in bringing us together.

All: For this we give thanks.

One: As we mend relationships, families, and hearts directly impacted by HIV/AIDS, we know you hold us close and love us evermore.

All: For this we give thanks.

One: And as we bear witness to the challenges we face today and tomorrow, we know you will guide us forward.

All: And for this, we give thanks. Amen

HIV 101

Without treatment, HIV (human immunodeficiency virus) can make a person very sick and even cause death. Learning the basics about HIV can keep you healthy and prevent transmission.

HIV CAN BE TRANSMITTED BY



Sexual Contact



Sharing Needles to Inject Drugs



Mother to Baby During Pregnancy, Birth, or Breastfeeding

HIV IS NOT TRANSMITTED BY



Air or Water



Saliva, Sweat, Tears, or Closed-Mouth Kissing



Insects or Pets



Sharing Toilets, Food, or Drinks

PROTECT YOURSELF FROM HIV

- Get tested at least once or more often if you are at risk.
- Use condoms the right way every time you have anal or vaginal sex.
- Choose activities with little to no risk like oral sex.
- Don't inject drugs, or if you do, don't share needles, syringes, or other drug injection equipment.



- If you are at risk for HIV, ask your health care provider if pre-exposure prophylaxis (PrEP) is right for you.
- If you think you've been exposed to HIV within the last 3 days, ask a health care provider about post-exposure prophylaxis (PEP) right away. PEP can prevent HIV, but it must be started within 72 hours.
- Get tested and treated for other STDs.



KEEP YOURSELF HEALTHY AND PROTECT OTHERS IF YOU HAVE HIV

- Find HIV care. It can keep you healthy and help reduce the risk of transmitting HIV to others.
- Take your HIV medicine as prescribed.
- Stay in HIV care.



- Tell your sex or injection partners that you have HIV. Use condoms the right way every time you have sex, and talk to your partners about PrEP.
- Get tested and treated for other STDs.

For more information, please visit www.cdc.gov/hiv.





Social Determinants of Health and HIV Among the South

In 2020, the south made up **52% of new HIV diagnoses** in the U.S.

Social Determinants of Health such as **poverty**, **education**, **lack of insurance**, and **unemployment** can negatively impact HIV-related health outcomes for people living in the **South**, especially among sexual and/or racial/ethnic minorities.

12.8% of U.S. population were living in poverty.



Poverty



Source: ACS, 2020

14.1% of people in the south are living in poverty.



8.7% of U.S. population is lacking health insurance.



Uninsured



Source: ACS, 2020

11.9% of people in the south are lacking health insurance.



8.1% of U.S. population unemployed.



Unemployment



Source: Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2020

7.2% of people in the south are unemployed.



88.5% of U.S. population has at least a high school education.



Education



(among those aged 25 and older)

Source: ACS, 2020

87.5% of people in the south have at least a high school education.



The national median household income:

\$64,994

The median household income for people in the south:

\$59,816



Median Income

Source: ACS, 2020

11.8% of individuals in U.S. are living with food insecurity.



Food Insecurity



Source: U.S. Dept. of Agriculture, 2020

13.6% of people in the south are living with food insecurity.



About the North Carolina Council of Churches

From efforts on behalf of farmworkers to encouraging the protection of God's earth to exposing racism within the criminal justice system, the North Carolina Council of Churches is at the forefront of progressive social issues that go to the heart of whom God would have us to be.

By drawing together members of eighteen Christian denominations in this work, the Council also serves our other key focus, Christian unity.

While the Council is itself overtly Christian, many of the committees and task groups are interfaith, including members from nonChristian faith communities. Several committees also include members of Christian denominations which are not part of the Council of Churches. Through this work, we live our motto:

Strength in Unity, Peace through Justice.

Our members include twenty-three judicatories of the following eighteen denominations, as well as eight individual congregations:

- African Methodist Episcopal Church
- African Methodist Episcopal Zion Church
- Alliance of Baptists
- Christian Church (Disciples of Christ)
- Christian Methodist Episcopal Church
- Episcopal Church
- Evangelical Lutheran Church in America
- General Baptist State Convention
- Metropolitan Community Churches
- Moravian Church in America
- Mennonite Church USA
- Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.)
- Reformed Church in America
- Reformed Churches of God in Christ International
- Religious Society of Friends
- Unity Fellowship Church Movement
- United Church of Christ
- United Methodist Church