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Greetings from Bishop Julius Trimble, UMGAC Chair

As Christians and United Methodists, we are called to be advocates for those on the margins of society which includes people living with HIV or AIDS. We've talked a lot about stigma and recognize its existence and its harm. Stigma and harm can also come through public policies.

In President Trump's State of the Union, he announced a new AIDS Initiative: "Ending the HIV Epidemic: A Plan for America", an effort to eradicate new HIV infections by 2030. This ambitious goal is to be commended; however, in order to accomplish this mission, increased resources will need to be secured.

This newsletter includes information about the funding being proposed by the Trump White House and ways you can respond. Please read it. It's vital for those living with HIV or AIDS. Let us be spirit-filled people as witnesses to God's love and grace for all. Thanks for your commitment and care for those living with the HIV or AIDS viruses. Be encouraged!

Bishop Julius C. Trimble, UMGAC Chair



Freetown, Sierra Leone
Know Your Status HIV Project, Funded by United Methodist Global AIDS Fund through GBGM

KNOW YOUR STATUS : Sierra Leone Health Board's HIV Project Funded by UMGAF

A young man confessed to the HIV program coordinator that testing for HIV was something he had vowed never to do. However, after the young people in his community had launched their awareness campaign, he changed his mind. He had believed that the white man had manufactured the disease and could produce positive results in whomever he wanted. The young man had thought that testing was irrelevant because the moment you knew your status, you would start to lose weight and to lose your health. He didn't want to die before God's given time.

The Peer Educators he met explained that knowing his status would help him to stay healthy and stop him from passing on the disease. They told him, if he was positive, he would have the opportunity to see the counselors who would give him hope and advise him on his medications and his future. He had a future. He would also be able to protect his partners. If he was negative, his new understanding would help him to stay safe.

Reported by Kathleen Griffith, Program Manager [Maternal, Newborn and Child Health] The Global Health Unit, General Board of Global Ministries | The United Methodist Church.

Using a grant from the United Methodist Global AIDS Fund, the Sierra Leone Health Board has been working with the Government to provide HIV education and awareness in schools, communities and United Methodist Health Facilities, with HIV Counseling and Testing, and linkage to treatment and support. **No one wants to know their status when treatment may not be available, but stigma is.** This project has worked to provide one and reduce the other..



Reflections from the Special General Conference 2019

The United Methodist Church has received significant national/international publicity recently about its February 2019 special General Conference held in St. Louis. At that meeting, 864 delegates gathered for the sole purpose of addressing the issue of human sexuality. The United Methodist Church is a global Christian denomination with members in the United States, parts of Africa, Europe and the Philippines. We are not "of one mind" on this specific topic – a reality affirmed at this event.

What prevailed was the adoption of The Traditional Plan – a proposal that maintains language in the Book of Discipline stating that "The United Methodist Church does not condone the practice of homosexuality and considers this practice incompatible with Christian teaching". This statement is the foundation for several current disciplinary restrictive statements impacting clergy. The Traditional Plan levies even more restrictions and punishments on clergy who violate this language.

With Christ as our example, the United Methodist Global AIDS Committee extends love and affirmation to people living with HIV or AIDS many of whom are LGBTQ+. We recognize the church has levied harm against LGBTQ+ people and people living with HIV or AIDS. For these acts of hurt and discrimination, we ask forgiveness.

For your reading, the following four articles present reflections from three current members of UMGAC and one past member. of the UMGAC members followed by some action steps you might wish to consider.

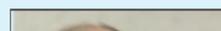
Bishop Trimble, Chair UMGAC

"[My vision is...] a Church that is open to all people



Rev. Dr. Donald Messer, UMGAC Founding Member

"What happened in St.



and values the stories, gifts, talents, and witness of its members and families. A Church characterized by affirmation that God's grace is available to all and diversity is to be celebrated not feared. A Church where people together experience Christian community, welcoming, forgiving, and loving one another as Christ has loved and accepted us."



Louis at the special 2019 United Methodist General Conference came as a traumatic shock to most United Methodists in the United States. The denomination embraced a fundamentalist understanding of Scripture and demonstrated callous disregard for LGBTQ persons and their families.



"To United Methodists who are LGBTQI+, to our brothers, sisters, siblings, friends, families, churches, communities, and supporters, I want to convey our love and support for you and for a Church where our welcome is not hollow and our commitment to full inclusion is more than aspirational. Your sacred worth and personhood is not determined by church votes in a denomination too long divided on matters of human sexuality. The movement of God and the human rights of Hoosiers who chose to worship and do ministry in **The United Methodist Church cannot be held hostage by votes at a General Conference or the wide chasm between those who read the Bible and see condemnation and others who read the Bible and see grace.**"

Irreparable harm has been done to individuals, couples and families, as well as to congregations, seminaries, colleges and universities affiliated with the United Methodist Church."

"I will keep denouncing the powers of injustice and evil in my church and society. I will keep working on HIV and AIDS in Africa and the Philippines, seeking ways to be supportive of my LGBTQ sisters and brothers in those countries. And I will keep resisting those who aim to harm my Bishop, her spouse, and all my LGBTQ sisters and brothers. With age, "this little light of mine" may be fading and not as bright as it once was, but as long as God gives me life and breath, I will not put it under a premature casket. NO, I will seek to let it shine, shine, shine."



**Kent Millard,
UMGAC Former
Member**

It seems obvious that we are a deeply divided denomination over this

issue and that our best efforts to find a way to keep the denomination together over the past 40 years has not been successful. This situation causes me to weep because I have good friends who are all deeply devoted disciples of Jesus Christ and are on opposite sides of this issue.

I have attended 12 General Conferences since 1976 and have been part of countless dialogues and commissions which have tried to find a way to unify our denomination without success. In the past, I have opposed all efforts to divide our denomination. *However, this past General Conference convinced me that continuing to quarrel over this issue hurts people on all sides, does not glorify God, does not demonstrate unconditional love for all people, or help make disciples of Jesus Christ for the transformation of the world.*

Therefore with a heavy heart and deep regret I believe it may be time for our leaders to find a way for United Methodist Christians to separate so that we stop harming each other and each side can get on with the business of sharing God's Good News with a hurting world in new and separate organizational structures.

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**Doug Smith,
Secretary, UMGAC**

I was elected to UMGAC as a gay man living with HIV. It was the United Methodist

Church that embraced me and helped me to process grief, joy, and marry my husband in my place of worship. The Commission on the Way Forward gave me hope that church policies would be changed to fully embrace all people.

We have had a "Vision of one United Methodist Church" for decades. The process to accomplish this has ended in clear statement that violates the rights of LGBTQI+ people. The UMC is not "a Home for All God's People."

I agree with my colleague and friend, Kent Millard when he says "it may be time for our leaders to find a way for United Methodist Christians to separate so that we stop harming each other and each side can get on with the business of sharing God's Good News with a hurting world in new and separate organizational structures."

I cannot be a member of a Church that has decided to reject gay clergy and to deny same-sex couples the right to be married in their place of worship and furthermore, has strengthen the punishment for violations of these church laws. This is hateful discrimination.

With painful regret, I have personally revoked my membership in the United Methodist Church. I am committed to do all I can to help us begin separation from the UMC. In my opinion, that is the only action that will show that we mean it when we say:

***Do no Harm.
Do Good.
Stay in Love with God.***

May It Be So,
Doug Smith

Do No Harm: Action

If your church cannot abide by UMC Traditional Plan-



Be proactive to determine the way forward for your congregation.

Begin conversations with gay people in your church and neighborhoods.

If appropriate for your congregation, publish articles letting your gay community know that your church is actively working on a way forward to create a church that accepts all of God's people.

What All Churches Can Do

1. Pray for church leaders and those who are in harm's way.
2. Explore how your congregation can become a welcoming congregation to all God's people.
3. Challenge those you love who hold to views that discriminate and stigmatize persons.
4. Identify visible signs that say "We love you and you are welcome here!"
5. Sponsor an HIV testing site at your church – work with your local health department.
6. Design and sponsor a church study on heterosexism and homophobia
7. Publicize through your church ways to be in ministry with those living with HIV or AIDS. For more information check out: **The Church and the Global HIV/AIDS Pandemic: Recommendations for Local congregations worldwide**

[More info...](#)



Reflections on My Participation in the Indianapolis Breaking Barriers AIDS Conference

“Often, I think I am being guided in the role of community advocate by an invisible hand. My advocacy efforts are pointed in the direction of increasing interest that faith-based organizations can play in promoting health and health care access among unidentified populations. Church-based health involvement is growing, because the Church can play a prominent role promoting health and well-being both within congregations and throughout communities. The relationship between faith, and health is best demonstrated by the effectiveness of the services I attend each Sunday. Our church leaders, plus the congregation itself, is enthusiastic about working with the science community to address health and health care.

Michelle Jackson-Rollin, Cleveland, OH

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Action Alert! Your Voice is Important!



President Trump has released his budget for FY 2020 which now goes to the US Congress for consideration. It includes several increases for AIDS programs in the United States but also includes damaging cuts to key programs benefiting people living with the virus. Please check out our [Action Alert](#) and contact your US Senators and your US Representative. Thank you!

For information on President Trump's "Ending the HIV Epidemic: A Plan for America" click the button.

[More info...](#)



UNAIDS executive director Michel Sidibé during the workshop on HIV in Geneva.
Photo: Albin Hillert/WCC

Role of Faith-Based Organizations Lauded by UNAIDS

“In remarks during a workshop on HIV among migrants and refugees, UNAIDS executive director Michel Sidibé spoke of the challenge of HIV in what has become a rapidly changing and very unpredictable world. ‘We believe you will never be able to reach people when you are born privileged,’ Sidibé reflected. ‘Your job is to cross the road and reach people who are not privileged. What we need are bridges connecting us all to reach other.’”

[Read More](#)

New Factsheets on HIV's Impact in the African American Community now available!

According to HIV.gov (a website of the US Department of Health & Human Services), African Americans continue to experience the greatest burden of HIV compared to other races and ethnicities in the United States. In 2017, Blacks/African Americans accounted for 13% of the U.S. population but 43% (16,694) of the 38,739 new HIV diagnoses in the United States and dependent areas. Black/African American gay, bisexual, and other men who have sex with men are more affected by HIV than any other group in the United States. That same year – 2017 – Black/African American gay and bisexual men accounted for 26% (10,070) of the 38,739 new HIV diagnoses nationwide.

[More info...](#)

NAACP is taking bold action on HIV & AIDS

The NAACP is calling the church – specifically the Black churches - to become involved in the HIV and AIDS crisis facing the African American community in the United States. Check out their website as well as this compelling [video](#). We all need to educate ourselves about this crisis and take action where and when we can. Did you know?

- One in 16 Black men will be diagnosed with HIV in their lifetime
- One in 32 Black men will be diagnosed with HIV in their lifetime Black men make up 11% of US population, but account for 42% of the new male infections
- Black women comprise 12 % of US population, but account for 64% of new female infections. education, and full participation in the Church..

[More info...](#)

Resources

Black Americans and HIV/AIDS: [The Basics](#)

Kaiser Family Foundation Latest News on Progress on HIV Prevention - [US Department of Health & Human Services](#)

Upcoming Observance Days

One way to raise awareness about HIV or AIDS in your local congregation or community is to observe the national AIDS Awareness Days. Below are three approaching days around which you could organize.

May 18th [HIV Vaccine Awareness Day](#)

May 19th [National Asian and Pacific Islander HIV/AIDS Awareness Day](#)

June 27th [National HIV Testing Day](#) : Organize a testing day in your local church by working with your local health department! Knowing your status is so important!

Amos 5:24 The Message

I can't stand your religious meetings.

I'm fed up with your conferences and conventions.

I want nothing to do with your religion projects, your pretentious slogans and goals.

I'm sick of your fund-raising schemes, your public relations and image making.

I've had all I can take of your noisy ego-music. When was the last time you sang to me?

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.



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umgafund@gmail.com - www.umglobalaidsfund.com
We sent out this message from the United Methodist Church
If you no longer wish to receive these emails, simply email umgafund@gmail.com
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