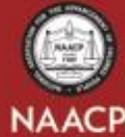




THE BLACK CHURCH & HIV THE SOCIAL JUSTICE IMPERATIVE



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.

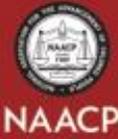
Example: Use a mobile survey to ask congregants "Do you know anyone personally who is HIV positive?" during worship service. Results will vary depending on your church, but typically, congregants will realize just how close-to-home the issue really is. This can demonstrate that HIV is not a discussion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

