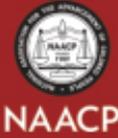




THE BLACK CHURCH & HIV THE SOCIAL JUSTICE IMPERATIVE



Faith leaders Across the U.S. Address HIV/AIDS from The Pulpit

We, as faith leaders, can make a difference in the lives of our congregates and community by using available resources and the Word of God to raise awareness about health injustices and ways to stop the HIV epidemic in Black America. One of the most important ways we can educate our Church is from the pulpit.

Below are testimonials from faith leaders across the country who have brought the conversation of HIV/AIDS to their congregations to **erase stigma**.

Erase Stigma

Reverend John R. Faison Sr. **Nashville, Tennessee**

"We asked this question during one of our worship services: 'Do you know anyone personally who is HIV-positive or who has died from AIDS?' People responded "YES" or "NO" to the poll anonymously via their cell phones. Results from largest service surveyed were: YES:93%, NO: 7%. The immediacy and impact of the results gave gravity to the subject matter. HIV was no longer a discussion about 'them' outside of the sanctuary; it was about 'us' sitting in this sanctuary."

Reverend Dr. Timothy Sloan **Humble, Texas**

Senior Pastor at St. Luke Missionary Baptist Church in Humble, TX, preached a sermon that included messages on HIV. Before he got up to speak, Rev. Sloan had many thoughts in his head that day: "How will this message be received?" "Are people going to walk out on me during the sermon?"

"Is this message going to touch someone?" "Am I doing the right thing?"

Rev. Sloan soon discovered that his message touched so many that he received a standing ovation. He was encouraged by the positive reception and knew that by using the power of the pulpit, he could reach his flock and encourage them to face the HIV epidemic in our community head-on. He stood on his faith and the Word of God.

Reverend Kelcy Steele **Los Angeles, California**

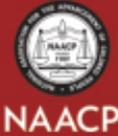
"As a local pastor, I continue to preach and teach and bring awareness around this issue [of HIV] to help remove the ignorance around it and drive away the stigma that prevents people from getting tested and seeking the appropriate medical care."

Minister Eugenia McClain **Detroit, Michigan**

"If someone came to me and said, 'I have this problem', I won't, first of all, look at them and say, 'look I know where you got it from'. I won't be judgmental. 'Okay well this is what's going on. Let's pray about it. Let's go to God on this and let's see what resources we can deal with.' That's me being personal."



THE BLACK CHURCH & HIV THE SOCIAL JUSTICE IMPERATIVE



Reverend Johnson

Los Angeles, California

“Sometimes when we talk about the stigma and the silence of the Church, we fail to recognize that our greatest weapon is the proclamation. That’s the first step right there is to talk about it.”

“How you talk about wholeness when the stigma exists is the same way you talk about, you know, the boy that’s in jail. You talk about wholeness when I lost my job, when there’s domestic violence, trouble, and I lay awake at night. How do you deal with it? It’s no different from any other kind of trouble and I think that that’s again broaching the subject in a way of saying, this falls into a category just like any other kind of life’s trial that makes a person experience brokenness.”

Baltimore Faith Leader

“We have had a health ministry [on HIV] for years, and we provide education and testing. It was not meaningful to the people until I made a statement about it. One Sunday morning [as] I struggled with how to tell the people to use condoms, I looked out from the pulpit and saw how many of the young people were pregnant. I said, ‘I’m teaching abstinence, and it’s obvious that it’s not happening.’ Half of the young people said, ‘Pastor, we needed to hear that.’”

Houston Faith Leader

“We provide a support group for people who have been infected and affected [by HIV] and just give them a place to be loved unconditionally. I think that’s the real big challenge we have as a Church, it’s to love people unconditionally. In what condition they are in knowing that all of us have issues, and we all want to experience this unconditional love that God has displayed for us. But very clearly, I think it is incumbent upon us to be a community of love and embrace people where they are to help them get where God wants them to be.”

Philadelphia Faith Leader

“We still forget that there is fear within people about letting everybody else know that they have AIDS because of the stigma that accompanies this disease. There’s fear, and the Word says that God has not been given the spirit of fear. Fear is a spirit that goes all around, that hinders any of us from doing exactly what we need to do in the community.”