“Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. said, ‘There comes a time where silence is betrayal’...for too long, the Black Church has been silent about HIV/AIDS...that is unforgiveable and it has to change. We have a moral...ethical, and spiritual obligation to speak out, to support, and to embrace people who are at risk for, and who are living with this disease.”

– Reverend Charles McWells, Los Angeles
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“As stated by the NAACP, ‘Social justice is the sustained commitment to create a society based on equality and fairness for all people.’ We must engage our Black community to do this as ‘the challenge of social justice is to evoke a sense of community that we need to make our nation a better place, just as we make it a safer place.’”

— Marian Wright Edelman
INTRODUCTION

For centuries, the Black Church has been the backbone of the African-American community. The Church has provided us faith, love, and fellowship, as well as healing, power, and purpose. The Church has been a constant community leader—one that has promoted change, pushed for equality, and advocated for social justice.

Social justice is the sustained commitment to create a society based on equality and fairness for all people, and as such remains at the center of the Black Church’s mission to continue the work of Christ to care for and serve all people, especially those among us who are our most vulnerable. Among our most vulnerable are those affected by HIV. As eloquently stated by Bishop John Bryant of the African Methodist Episcopal Church in Chicago: “The Black Church is the only institution that has loved [all of] our people from the cradle to the grave. We loved them through slavery, through poverty, and through racism. We cannot make HIV the exception to our love. As the Mother Institution, we must love our people through the valley of HIV.”

It is in this spirit that the NAACP and our partner, Gilead Sciences, Inc., launched The Black Church & HIV: The Social Justice Imperative Initiative to empower African-American faith leaders with the knowledge and support needed to preach to their congregations about HIV.

The Church has fought tirelessly to ensure a more equitable distribution of resources, opportunities, and responsibilities throughout society. This advocacy has been instrumental in energizing multiple social movements, including those to end slavery, expand educational opportunities, fight for employment rights, and increase voter registration. These movements individually have elevated the social, wellness, educational, financial, and professional opportunities available to African Americans nationwide. Millions of African Americans have been catapulted out of poverty, achieved higher education, accessed quality health options, and grasped wealth opportunities that were deliberately and consistently withheld from them in the past. But others are still left behind.
It is time to uplift them all—including those affected by HIV. It is time to pull everyone forward.

We have developed this Activity Manual to build on The Black Church & HIV: The Social Justice Imperative Initiative’s Pastoral Brief. It is designed to provide our faith leader partners with more detailed information about HIV, as well as specific recommendations on activities to be implemented in support of our efforts to combat HIV and AIDS in the African-American community.

In partnership with the faith community, the NAACP accepts our responsibility to continue Christ’s work to be a voice for the voiceless; care for those in our community who are ill; and be advocates for our community members who desire and deserve our help. In this spirit, we recognize the HIV epidemic in the African-American community as a social justice issue, and we readily take up the mantle to implement Initiative activities to combat this disease in African-American communities across the United States.

We focus on addressing HIV as a social justice issue to address health inequities and disparities. As noted by Bishop Bryant, just as the Black Church has and continues to “love [African Americans] through slavery, through poverty, and through racism,” to stand on the front lines of other key social justice issues like civil and voting rights, and defend the rights of the poor and powerless, the Initiative embarks upon a similar drive to serve the millions of African Americans living with or affected by HIV.

So how do you get involved? What can you do? The answers to these questions are in this Activity Manual. Faith leaders have a vital role to play in using the power of the pulpit to talk about HIV as a social justice issue; empower congregants to participate in HIV education activities (described herein); and, ultimately, help stem the tide of the epidemic in the African-American community.

This Activity Manual details how to partner with the NAACP and Gilead Sciences to bring the tenets of the Initiative to your church and your community. This manual provides important information about the Initiative’s core components and, most important, the five key activities in which you can engage to combat HIV in the African-American community. This Activity Manual includes the following:

- Description of HIV and how it disproportionately affects African Americans.
- Explanation of how HIV is a social justice issue and how you can discuss this issue within your congregation.
- Outline of key Initiative components.
  - Faith leader trainings.
  - Denominational leadership engagement.
  - Seminary integration.
- Detail of Initiative activities for you and your congregation.
  - Praying and preaching about HIV from the pulpit.
  - Participating in the Day of Unity.
  - Integrating activities to address HIV into your existing church programs.

Our African-American community bears the heaviest burden of HIV in this country, and we must “be the change we wish to see in the world” to combat this disease. We call on all faith leaders and soldiers of Christ to confront this disease, bring a life-giving message of hope, and work to improve the health and strength of our community.

Get involved. Join us in the fight.
For more than 200 years, the Black Church has fought for social justice for African Americans. It has worked to end slavery, to expand opportunities for education, to ensure equal employment and voting rights, and otherwise to help African Americans participate equally in American society. As the nation’s oldest and largest civil rights organization, the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) has focused on promoting social justice and collaborated with the Black Church to fight against policies and practices that undermine our fundamental rights. The need has been great. The challenges many. And they only continue.

THE ROLE OF THE BLACK CHURCH AND NAACP
Great things are accomplished when the Black Church and the NAACP unite. Together, we have fought social injustice through joint civic participation and activism.

Eliminating HIV will take another great effort—one that requires all of us. An effort that will change and save lives, and build upon the foundation that the Black Church and NAACP built and maintained over decades. The work is difficult, but the task is not insurmountable. To address the challenge of HIV in the African-American community, in 2010, Gilead Sciences joined the NAACP to create The Black Church
& HIV: The Social Justice Imperative Initiative. The Initiative seeks to reverse the impact of HIV on African Americans by providing faith leaders like you with the knowledge and support to address HIV as a social justice issue within and through their churches. Since the Initiative was founded, the most critical component has been you—faith leaders and the faith community.

You have helped us learn how to create the most effective program to make a real difference for our community. The current Initiative is the result of a year-long, 12-city research tour to understand how Black Church leaders respond to HIV in their communities. The research engaged more than 250 faith leaders across denominations to identify what the Black Church can do about HIV among African Americans. We listened. We learned. And we have now put that information into action.

What the pilot revealed is that there are still opportunities for churches to impact HIV, but there are also barriers to preaching from the pulpit about the disease and its effect on African-American communities. These barriers are challenging, but we can overcome them. They include countering myths and misperceptions about the virus, distributing information about prevention and local resources for testing and treatment, breaking down personal beliefs about sexual orientation, and challenging the fear of losing either congregants or denominational affiliation. We know addressing HIV through the Church is not an easy task. The conversations can be personal and difficult. The educational activities can be a challenge to plan and implement. However, the pilot also showed us that leaders want to overcome these barriers, help their communities, and embrace all of their congregants.

Faith leaders are able to overcome these barriers through training and education. They are able to learn more about why HIV should be viewed differently, and therefore be able to commit more fully at the denominational level to extend the Black Church’s historical social justice mission to include treating HIV as a social justice issue.

With that in mind, in partnership with the Black Church, we seek to change the way HIV is viewed and approached in the African-American community. By changing perceptions of HIV through the eyes of the Church, more African Americans will feel support. More will get tested, know their HIV status, access care and treatment, and take steps to prevent new infections. And more community members will reduce stigma and support their brothers and sisters affected by the disease.

CLINTON GLOBAL INITIATIVE COMMITMENT TO ACTION IN 2013
As a result of the overwhelmingly positive response to the pilot of the Initiative, the NAACP and Gilead Sciences also made a joint Clinton Global Initiative (CGI) Commitment to Action in 2013 to scale up the Initiative and expand its reach over five years (2013 - 2018) by engaging faith leaders in the 30 cities whose populations make up nearly two-thirds of the nation’s HIV epidemic.
The Black Church & HIV: The Social Justice Imperative Initiative has three key core components:

1. Faith leader trainings (or strategy sessions).
2. Denominational leadership engagement.
3. Seminary integration.

In addition, we advocate for you and your congregation to participate in several activities, including:

1. Praying and preaching about HIV from the pulpit.
2. Participating in the NAACP’s Day of Unity.
3. Integrating activities to address HIV into your existing church programs.

The three core components are designed to help current and future faith leaders:

1. Understand HIV as a social justice issue.
2. Commit to preaching and praying about HIV as a social justice issue.

**FAITH LEADER TRAININGS (STRATEGY SESSIONS)**
Knowledge is key when addressing HIV. And the necessary learning must begin with you as faith leaders. You must understand the impact of HIV on African Americans. You must understand why the Black Church and faith leaders are important to ending HIV. You must understand how to address HIV as a social justice issue. And you must learn why it’s important to make a commitment to the Initiative and how you and your congregation can get involved.

Through 2018, the Initiative will host 45 in-person trainings across 30 cities nationwide. These trainings will encourage faith leaders like you to actively champion the Initiative with local community organizations. Following these sessions, the NAACP and Initiative “Ambassadors” will work closely with you to help develop an action plan for your church. Visit [http://theblackchurchandhiv.org/event/](http://theblackchurchandhiv.org/event/) to find a faith leader event near you.

**DENOMINATIONAL LEADERSHIP ENGAGEMENT**
Action begins with leadership. To make addressing HIV a priority in the Black Church, we need denominational leadership. We know that the mainline denominations representing historically Black Churches have the power to influence the 53% of African Americans who report going to church weekly (Pew Research Center, 2009). Therefore, the Initiative is working with seven of the nine mainline and historically African-American denominations to make an official commitment, directive, or resolution to support HIV as a social justice issue and to endorse the Initiative. This national commitment will ultimately support the work by individual faith leaders within those denominations as they change how HIV is viewed by African Americans and discussed in churches.

**INITIATIVE AMBASSADORS**
Initiative ambassadors are faith leaders who are representatives of the Initiative with real-life experience implementing HIV activities.

Ambassadors can also provide technical assistance to churches implementing the Initiative.
SEMINARY INTEGRATION
Seminaries are important institutions in the Black Church and provide theological training and practical leadership development for current and future faith leaders. Through 2018, the Initiative will work with predominantly African-American seminaries to integrate HIV as a social justice issue into their course curricula. This includes providing opportunities for guest lecturers, integrating content on HIV into seminary courses, and adding activities that focus on HIV as a social justice issue into seminary life.

INITIATIVE ACTIVITIES
The core components of the Initiative are designed to prepare you, as a faith leader, to use the power of the pulpit to preach and pray about HIV as a social justice issue and to integrate HIV as a social justice issue into existing church activities, thus creating an environment that supports you in doing so. The Initiative promotes several activities for you and your congregation.

PRAYING AND PREACHING FROM THE PULPIT
One of the most effective ways to address HIV as a social justice issue is to use the power of your voice from the pulpit. You can use your sermons to discuss social justice issues and include HIV in the discussion. Faith leaders can also explain how congregants can work together and with the Church to fight against HIV in their communities. You also may tie your sermons to national observance days to further raise awareness about HIV. See page 21 of this Activity Manual to learn more about how to pray and preach from the pulpit.

DAY OF UNITY
Each year, the Initiative celebrates the Day of Unity, during which faith leaders nationwide unite to preach from the pulpit about HIV as a social justice issue (http://theblackchurchandhiv.org/day-of-unity/). The Day of Unity is a cornerstone of the Initiative—it is designed to inspire and encourage faith leaders to address the HIV epidemic in their communities, reduce stigma, and create a network of knowledge and action around HIV as a social justice issue. See page 22 of this Activity Manual for details on how to implement the Day of Unity at your church.

INTEGRATING ACTIVITIES INTO YOUR EXISTING CHURCH PROGRAMS
We understand how difficult it may be to create a new program focused exclusively on HIV education and action. That is why the Initiative encourages faith leaders to integrate HIV-specific education efforts into existing church programs. These existing programs may include those that are already focused on fulfilling Christ’s mission of caring for the sick. Churches may also already have relationships with local health departments or community organizations that offer opportunities to increase HIV education. Linking the messages of the Initiative to your work to address other social justice issues (e.g., voting rights, hunger, employment, homelessness) will likely help increase understanding and acceptance of HIV as a social justice issue in your community.
OVERVIEW OF HIV

To address HIV as a social justice issue, it is important to understand the disease. You don’t need to be a health expert or a medical professional to do so; however, it is important for you as a faith leader to know and share accurate information. This overview of HIV will provide you with a basic foundation upon which to build.

The human immunodeficiency virus (HIV) weakens a person’s immune system by destroying important cells that fight disease and infection. No effective cure exists for HIV. But with proper medical care, HIV can be controlled. Acquired immunodeficiency syndrome (AIDS) is the most severe phase of HIV infection. People with AIDS have such badly damaged immune systems that they get an increasing number of severe illnesses. HIV remains a significant problem in the United States, even with recent advances in treatment of the disease.

Many in the public still hold incorrect views about how HIV is transmitted from one individual to another and who is most at risk of contracting the virus. HIV is transmitted through contact with certain bodily fluids, specifically blood, semen, vaginal secretions, and breast milk. People come in contact with these fluids in the following ways:

- **Sexual Transmission.** Not using a condom when having sex (oral, vaginal, or anal) with a person who has HIV.

- **Needle-Sharing/Blood-to-Blood Contact.** Sharing needles, syringes, or other equipment that comes in contact with the blood of an infected person.

- **Mother-to-Child Transmission.** Being born to an infected mother; HIV can be passed from mother to child during pregnancy, birth, or breast-feeding.

It also is important to understand ways in which HIV is not transmitted. HIV cannot be transmitted through touch, mosquitoes, tears, kissing, toilet seats, sharing utensils, hugging, shaking hands, or sharing a living space with someone who is HIV-positive.
Protection from HIV is important, and there are several ways in which a person can protect themselves:

- Get tested and know your partner’s HIV status. Talk to your partner about HIV testing and get tested before you have sex.
- Use a condom correctly every time you have sex.
- Get tested and treated for sexually transmitted infections (STIs). Insist that your partners get tested and treated as well.
- Explore current prevention tools along with regular condom use to reduce the transmission of HIV. PrEP (Pre-Exposure Prophylaxis) is a way for people who do not have HIV but who are at substantial risk of getting it to prevent HIV infection by taking a pill every day. These people may include those who have sex with HIV-positive individuals or injecting drug users.
- Don’t inject or share injection equipment (needles). Use only sterile drug injection equipment and never share your equipment with others.

**OVERVIEW OF NATIONAL EPIDEMIC**

While progress has been made in preventing and treating HIV, there is still much to do to stop new infections. According to the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), more than 1.2 million people in the United States are living with HIV, and 13% of them are unaware they have the virus. Although new HIV diagnoses are concentrated in large cities (e.g., Los Angeles, Miami, New York, Atlanta, Washington, D.C.), HIV has been reported in all 50 states and the District of Columbia.

Concentration of individuals with HIV varies across the United States. However, it affects certain demographic populations, particularly African Americans, more than others. The two maps below depict the areas with the highest number of people living with HIV in the U.S. and the areas with the highest number of African Americans living with HIV. As you can see, HIV impacts the Deep South more than other regions, and this is the region with the greatest number of African Americans. Because of this, people living in the Deep South are at increased risk of HIV.
HIV AND AFRICAN AMERICANS IN THE U.S.
The 1980s saw the greatest HIV epidemic in the U.S. Deaths from the disease and related complications decimated communities, killing hundreds of thousands. But HIV is no longer a death sentence. It is now considered a chronic, manageable illness with proper care and treatment. People living with HIV now can live long and productive lives—with the right treatments, delivered early and consistently. That makes it all the more important for people to get tested and know their status.

More than any other racial/ethnic group in the United States, African Americans have been unequally impacted by HIV, and this has only worsened over time. Almost half (44%) of all new HIV diagnoses are among African-American men, women, and children (CDC, 2016). African Americans also made up almost half (48%) of all new AIDS cases in the U.S. in 2014 (CDC, 2016). In addition, a little more than a third of African Americans diagnosed with HIV are receiving proper treatment.

The CDC provides specific recommendations and guidelines for HIV prevention, testing, and care (https://www.cdc.gov/hiv/guidelines/). Yet African Americans are less likely to receive the recommended care due to lack of access to health care and other social determinants of health. Without life-extending medication, on average, African Americans tend to die sooner after an AIDS diagnosis than individuals of most other racial or ethnic groups (CDC, 2016). This means that, compared with other races and ethnicities, African Americans are more likely to die from HIV, and, in recent years, they account for more than half of U.S. deaths due to HIV. Now is the time for faith leaders and the Black Church to collectively rise up, stop this epidemic, and save our community.

A number of challenges continue to impact African Americans regarding HIV (CDC, 2016). They reflect an imbalance in the social determinants of health, which further show how HIV is a social justice issue that must be addressed. Such factors include:

- **Higher HIV prevalence among African Americans.** Social and sexual networks, along with viral prevalence, within some African-American communities can result in greater risk of HIV infection. The more the virus is present in a community, the more likely members of that community will continue to spread HIV to each other.

- **Late diagnosis among African Americans.** Because of limited access to information about HIV testing and treatment, African Americans are more likely to receive a delayed HIV diagnosis, at a later stage when the disease has progressed and the virus may be more difficult to treat.

- **Increased morbidity and mortality.** Because of later diagnoses of HIV, African Americans are more likely to die due to a weakened immune system. By starting treatment early, people live longer, healthier lives, and when their virus is undetectable, as with Magic Johnson, people are less likely to spread the virus in the community.

African Americans are also at increased risk of HIV because of social risk factors such as racism (historical and modern inequities), poverty, low incomes, mistrust of the health care system, unemployment and underemployment, low education, incarceration, crime, drug and alcohol abuse, and unsafe/unsafe neighborhoods.
Given the HIV epidemic’s continued and disproportionate impact on African Americans, there is a need for a continued focus that addresses HIV within this community, especially among African Americans who are gay and bisexual men or transgender females; lower-income African-American women and girls; and African-American youth ages 15 to 24 (for more information, please review the accompanying Pastoral Brief).

**CDC FACT SHEETS**

More information on the specific subgroups within the African-American community who are disproportionately impacted by HIV can be found via the following links:

http://www.cdc.gov/hiv/group/msm/bmsm.html

As noted in the previous section, African Americans are the racial and ethnic group most affected by HIV in the United States. A variety of socioeconomic issues place African Americans at greater risk for HIV and other diseases than other racial and/or ethnic groups.

This makes HIV a social justice issue.

WHAT IS SOCIAL JUSTICE?
Social justice is the fair and equitable distribution of social, economic, educational, and political resources and opportunities in a society, especially as it applies to equal treatment and the protection of those who are the most vulnerable. Social justice is a sustained commitment to creating a society based on equality and fairness for all people. Resources are distributed equitably and access to information about services and opportunities are available to all.

However, as African Americans, we do not have fair and equitable access to these resources in the United States; thus we face social injustices on many fronts. When these social injustices combine to put us at greater risk for diseases versus other racial and ethnic groups, including HIV infection and AIDS, it makes these diseases a social justice issue.

Now is the time to address the root causes of the HIV epidemic—the social determinants of health. These determinants include poverty, limited education, substandard housing, poor nutrition, inadequate access to affordable health care, and high levels of incarceration. All of these factors impact health outcomes and increase the risk of exposure to HIV or the

IN THE WORDS OF FAITH LEADERS
Faith leaders like Reverend Dr. Timothy Sloan have accepted this mantle. Reverend Sloan supports “the NAACP in ending the HIV epidemic in Black America because of the rich history and partnership between the NAACP and the Black Church in the fight against social injustice. It’s our prophetic responsibility to be a voice for the marginalized and oppressed.”
ability to protect oneself from infection. These factors affect all African Americans, both those with and those without HIV.

These poor social determinants of health tend to cluster around geographic areas—neighborhoods, communities, zip codes, cities, states—where large populations of African Americans live.

**By addressing these social determinants, we can address HIV.**

Treating HIV as a social justice issue means looking upstream at all of the other social justice issues that contribute to African Americans’ increased and unequal risk of infection. It means fighting stigma about being HIV-positive while you’re fighting the stigma that stems from racism. It means fighting for equal access to quality health care, not only for a congregation suffering from asthma brought on by urban pollution, but also for those in your community with HIV. Treating HIV as a social justice issue also provides the Black Church and you, its faith leaders, with an important set of allies with whom to fight the epidemic.

We can make strides in saving individuals and families from HIV’s destruction. Social interventions—many of which already are offered by churches—that focus on education, employment and job security, health services, housing, income, and social exclusion, can address the root causes of HIV vulnerability. Improving the number and frequency of these social interventions can help improve the lives of those living with HIV and those at greatest risk for infection.

The social justice movement is centered on fighting all forms of oppression, discrimination, and disenfranchisement. It calls for systemic change of governments, policies, and practices that empower all people to live healthy and productive lives. While social justice can be explored from an economic, educational, and political perspective, it also has a historic and biblical foundation that compels us to work for the equitable treatment of all people in our duty as faith leaders and servants of God. Social justice ministry is grounded in affirming life and the dignity and rights of all people.

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**WHAT IS HEALTH EQUITY?**

*Health equity is the equitable distribution of social, economic, educational, health, and political resources and opportunities that allow an individual to achieve optimal health.*

**WHAT ARE THE SOCIAL DETERMINANTS OF HEALTH?**

Examples of social determinants include:

- Availability of resources to meet daily needs.
- Access to educational, economic, and job opportunities.
- Access to health care services.
- Housing.
- Transportation options.
- Social support.
- Mass incarceration.
- Stigma, homophobia, and transphobia.
- Public safety and exposure to crime, violence, and social disorder.
- Culture.
Social justice means:

- Serving the whole person and providing mercy, love, and caring for one another to overcome injustices.
- Breaking down divisions, healing isolation, and honoring the interconnectedness of all life and all justice issues (racial, economic, voting, health, etc.).
- Treating human beings with dignity, care, and respect.
- Having a healthy relationship with yourself, with God, and with others.

This threat to the survival and well-being of our community is a human rights issue. A human issue. Our issue. **The Black Church has the power and influence necessary to address these social injustices and help stop the spread of HIV in our community. The Black Church has a sacred mission to improve the life and health, both spiritual and physical, of its members and surrounding community.** Partnering with the Initiative will help your church fulfill that mission.

The social justice movement is centered on fighting all forms of oppression, discrimination, and exclusion. It calls for change of governments, policies, and practices that will empower all people to live healthy and productive lives. A social justice perspective relies on changing hearts and minds and on collective action to make those changes. As people of faith, we are uniquely suited to take up this challenge. **Fighting for social justice is rooted within Scripture, which encourages the Church to fight for the oppressed. Addressing HIV as a social justice issue is a continuation of that fight. This is not an individual fight, but a battle that requires a unified group of allies and a sustained campaign of linked actions.** As faith leaders, we must work together to end the plague of HIV in our communities.

**WHY IS IT IMPORTANT TO ADDRESS HIV AS A SOCIAL JUSTICE ISSUE?**

In addition to providing you with an important set of allies with whom to fight the HIV epidemic, treating HIV as a social justice issue provides you with an important set of tools. These tools include:

- **Collective Action.** Working together with other faith leaders, churches, or community organizations.
- **Raising Awareness.** Conducting marches, rallies, public prayers, and sermons to draw attention to an issue.
- **Psychosocial Support.** Counseling and prayer with someone who is suffering.
- **Instrumental Support.** Seeking donations for those in need.

You may be familiar with many of these tools and use them to address different social justice issues. Therefore, **treating HIV as a social justice issue is likely to be an extension of what you are already doing in your congregation and community.** For example, your church already may be preparing meals for the homeless, collecting donations to assist single parents who are struggling to make ends meet, or offering after-school care to improve education or employment opportunities for youth. You may be leading rallies with other faith leaders to draw attention to substandard housing in your neighborhoods, marching to city hall to protest high rates of crime or ineffectual policing in your city, or partnering with other community leaders to write letters condemning the poor quality or lack of housing availability. You may be preaching about stigma...
or praying with a mother about her son in jail. All of these are activities that seek to address social justice issues.

Now is the time to include steps to eliminate HIV in your social justice fight. It’s important to address HIV from several angles. While you talk about prevention and treatment and share HIV facts, address reducing stigma. Address homelessness by providing opportunities for stable meals and housing that will help a homeless woman feel fed and safe and will thus engage in fewer risky behaviors that put her at risk of HIV infection. Provide after-school care and offer a safe space for youth that provides supportive services such as homework help or job-building counseling that can facilitate young people seeking education and employment—rather than engaging in behaviors that put them at risk of contracting HIV. Create an environment where everyone in the community feels safer, leading to less depression, fewer mental health issues, and less likelihood that people will engage in risky behaviors.

For those who are already HIV-positive, advocate for better health care—meaning more opportunities to receive the care that they need earlier and more consistently. Speak out against stigma and fear and preach from the pulpit about love and acceptance, which will impact people’s sense of self-worth and self-efficacy, and help them feel empowered to stay on their HIV medication and tell their partners about their HIV status, limiting the spread of the disease.

IN THE WORDS OF FAITH LEADERS
According to Pastor Jeffrey L. Reaves, Sr., “As a Pastor of a local church, I have the unique opportunity to help in combating the systemic stigmatization of people living with HIV in our community. This effort runs parallel with the Church’s long tradition and history of helping people, and so it’s a natural fit for me.”
Historically, the Black Church has been and continues to be a safe sanctuary in our community; it is a spiritual hospital where those in need can go for hope and healing. **The Initiative calls us as faith leaders to actively partner with the NAACP to end HIV in our community. As faith leaders, you have the power and influence to address HIV as a social justice issue through the power of the pulpit.**

Your commitment to the Initiative and ending the HIV epidemic in the African-American community comes with a price—your time, your energy, and your active involvement. But the benefits greatly outweigh the costs. Let us open the doors to everyone and help eliminate the stigma and social injustice that too often accompany HIV.

Your leadership is important. By reaching out to and speaking for those who need a voice—those who are unaware of their HIV status, do not openly discuss their status, or do not think they are at risk—you will not only be following the teachings of Christ, but also advocating for social justice. **We ask you to join our efforts, lend your influential voice to the issues of equity and justice centered on HIV, and speak out to end the disparities facing our community.**

**IN THE WORDS OF FAITH LEADERS**

Reverend Anthony “Tony” Lee provides an example of how his church has engaged in Initiative activities: “We conduct quarterly HIV testing and counseling in our church and we provide HIV/AIDS educational classes (HIV 101) for community members and other churches in the area. Our church also offers other churches training on how to conduct HIV/AIDS testing and counseling and how to set up HIV 101.”
We ask you to join the Initiative and take part in one or more of the following activities:

- **Attend a Faith Leader Training or Town Hall/Strategy Session.** The Faith Leader Training is a community session hosted by the NAACP and Gilead Sciences that’s approximately two hours long and is held in multiple cities nationwide. During the session, you will be introduced to the *Black Church & HIV: The Social Justice Imperative* Initiative; learn how HIV affects the African-American community; increase your knowledge about HIV as a social justice issue; and discover how you can get involved with the Initiative.

- **Pray and Preach from the Pulpit About HIV as a Social Justice Issue.** The Initiative wants you to use your voice to tackle HIV as a social justice issue. We encourage you to pray and preach from the pulpit to engage your congregation. This Activity Manual includes recommendations for how faith leaders can incorporate HIV health-related messages of acceptance, understanding, and compassion for those impacted by HIV. These sermon message points are designed to help reduce stigma and the impact of HIV on African Americans. Please review the Appendix for sermon ideas, prayers, and Scripture passages you can use with your congregation.

- **Participate in the NAACP Day of Unity.** NAACP is proud to organize the Day of Unity to encourage prayer, preaching, and nationwide awareness about the impact of HIV on African Americans. The Day of Unity takes place on a select Sunday each summer, with numerous faith leaders and churches around the country standing in solidarity on this issue.

- **Integrate Activities that Address HIV as a Social Justice Issue Into Existing Church Programs and Ministries.** It’s likely your church already has regular health-related activities—such as a diabetes education program, blood pressure screenings, blood drives, and health/fitness fairs. You may also have homeless outreach programs, a prison ministry, or ways to share information about financial literacy, home buying opportunities, and job skills building. As part of the Initiative, we ask you to look for opportunities to integrate activities that address HIV as a social justice issue into existing church programs and ministries.

Remember, fighting for social justice has its roots in Scripture, as fighting for the oppressed, weak, and defenseless is a constant charge in both the Old and New Testaments. Scripture encourages us to raise our voices and speak for those who cannot speak for themselves. **Partnering with the Initiative to conduct one or more of the four key activities noted in this Activity Manual is a way to continue Christ’s work in your congregation and community.**
KEY INITIATIVE ACTIVITIES THAT FAITH LEADERS CAN CONDUCT

Read on to learn more about each activity and receive guidance about how you can participate.

IN THE WORDS OF FAITH LEADERS
According to Reverend William Francis, it is important to participate in the trainings because “there is an immediate need for faith leaders to take action for what is happening with HIV in the Black community. For generations, the Black Church has been a leader for change in the Black community on issues of social justice, including voting rights and employment opportunities. Today, we are applying this tradition of social justice advocacy to the HIV epidemic.”

ATTEND A FAITH LEADER TRAINING
The Faith Leader Trainings are one of the first and most important ways you can participate in the Initiative. The trainings provide a forum for leaders to engage and start the process of collaboration for collective action.

Through 2018, the NAACP and Gilead Sciences are planning and facilitating 45 Faith Leader Trainings across the United States in the 30 cities with the greatest HIV burden. The goals of the Faith Leader Trainings are to:

- Help faith leaders understand HIV as a social justice issue.
- Share critical information with faith leaders about the national and local impact of HIV on the African-American community.
- Provide a safe and collaborative forum for faith leaders to meet, commune, and exchange ideas about how to address HIV as a social justice issue in African-American communities.

The trainings:

- Are organized by the NAACP, Gilead Sciences, and local African-American faith leaders, and they include a detailed agenda for the two- to three-hour sessions.
- Provide a space and environment for local faith leaders, public health officials, and
community organizations to engage with each other and identify ways to collaborate.

- Underscore and clarify the call to action encouraging faith leaders to actively champion the Initiative, as well as offer specific tips and “how-to” information on actively partnering with the Initiative and local organizations.

- Offer tips and “how-to” information on igniting collective action and building a local coalition. Examples of activities include preaching and praying about HIV from the pulpit; conducting HIV testing during existing church health ministry activities; and talking about HIV as a social justice issue during social justice ministry activities.

**HOW TO PARTICIPATE IN FAITH LEADER TRAININGS (STRATEGY SESSIONS)**

Participation in the Faith Leader Trainings is easy. Visit [http://theblackchurchandhiv.org/about/](http://theblackchurchandhiv.org/about/) to see the most up-to-date map of training cities and identify a training in your area. If there are no upcoming trainings taking place near you, please contact the NAACP Health Department through the “Contact Us” link on the website ([http://theblackchurchandhiv.org/contact-us/](http://theblackchurchandhiv.org/contact-us/)) for assistance. If you would like to request a training be held in your area, let us know.

There is nothing that you need to bring to the training other than an open mind, your knowledge of your faith community, and a collaborative spirit. To maximize opportunities for community collaboration, invite other faith leaders in your area to join the training with you. Please make sure all of your referrals register separately for the training.

**PRAY AND PREACH ABOUT HIV AS A SOCIAL JUSTICE ISSUE**

Praying and preaching from the pulpit about HIV as a social justice issue is another critical way that you can raise awareness about HIV as a social justice issue in the African-American community.

As agents of social change, faith leaders in the Black Church have the responsibility and are in a privileged position to fight for those amongst us who are ill, oppressed, and suffering from health inequities. Scripture encourages us to minister to and pray for the sick in our congregation and community; people living with HIV are among those in our midst who most need our help. As a faith leader, you can work collaboratively with each other, as well as other community leaders, to spread the word about HIV as a social justice issue and motivate your congregation and community to participate in Initiative activities—both inside and outside of the faith community.

**IN THE WORDS OF FAITH LEADERS**

Reverend Kelcy Steele highlights how preaching from the pulpit can have a powerful impact: “As a local pastor, I continue to preach and teach and bring awareness around this issue to help remove the ignorance around HIV and drive away the stigma that prevents people from getting tested and seeking the appropriate medical care.”

**HOW TO PRAY AND PREACH ABOUT HIV AS A SOCIAL JUSTICE ISSUE**

Use sermons to explain how social, environmental, and economic injustice impacts the health of your congregation and the broader African-American community in
your area. (See the Appendix for additional resources and sermon ideas for regular Sunday sermons and sermons for special awareness/observance days.)

- Explain in sermons how past social injustices have led to declining resources, lack of access to quality health care, and lack of knowledge about health issues, such as HIV and health-protective behaviors.
- Educate on how the more virus there is in the community, the more likely members of that community are to continue to spread HIV to each other.
- Sermons are one of the most powerful tools at your disposal to help you educate your congregation and community about HIV in the African-American community and why it is a social justice issue requiring our immediate attention.

From the pulpit, explain how congregants can work together and with the Church to fight against HIV in your community. One example is to encourage everyone to get tested and know their HIV status. You can also use sermons to challenge myths and misconceptions about HIV; underscore the importance of getting tested and knowing your status; and break down stigma and bias about getting tested for HIV.

It is also helpful to pray publicly for the health and healing of your congregation and community during sermons or during participation in you or your partners’ HIV prevention activities.

- If you start praying publicly and encourage your congregation to pray, they will follow your lead. You have only to act!
- Print prayers about HIV as a social justice issue in your weekly church programs.

In addition, there are a number of national awareness, observance, and testing days that occur throughout the year around which you can choose to schedule sermons, prayers, or other activities from the pulpit. The Initiative encourages you to use your Sunday sermons or other announcements during church services to raise awareness about national or international HIV awareness days and activities.

Visit the Initiative website “In the Community” page (http://theblackchurchandhiv.org/in-the-community/) to read about HIV awareness activities going on around the country and world. We know that, for some, addressing HIV from the pulpit for the first time can be challenging; however, remember you are not alone! Faith leaders around the country are preaching about HIV as a social justice issue.

**DAY OF UNITY**
As noted earlier, the Day of Unity is the cornerstone of the Initiative. It is the day that faith leaders from across the country unite to preach from the pulpit about HIV as a social justice issue. Participation in the Day of Unity accomplishes the following:

- Publicly acknowledges your commitment to and involvement with this Initiative.
- Inspires faith leaders across the United States to preach and pray publicly about ending the HIV epidemic, reducing HIV-related stigma and discrimination, and building a national coalition to address HIV in the Black Church and community.
- Brings multiple faith leaders and churches together to collectively and publicly endorse and speak about addressing HIV as a social justice issue in the African-American community.
HOW TO GET INVOLVED IN THE DAY OF UNITY
Each year, the Day of Unity is held on a select Sunday in the month of the NAACP National Convention. To get involved in the Day of Unity, contact the NAACP Health Department. You can also visit the “Day of Unity” page on the Initiative website (http://theblackchurchandhiv.org/day-of-unity/) to learn more. There you will have access to a toolkit to help you conduct your congregation’s Day of Unity activities. Be sure to add your church to the list of participating churches on the website, and share your participation through your church’s social media. On the Day of Unity, you are encouraged to pray or preach publicly about:

- The social, environmental, and economic injustices that lead to the disproportionate rates of HIV in the African-American community.
- The need to increase or enhance HIV knowledge and to dispel myths and misconceptions.
- The need to encourage more HIV testing among at-risk and vulnerable populations.
- The health of persons living with HIV.
- The congregation and African-American community being open to learning more about HIV, and open to individually getting tested and learning their HIV status.

In addition, on the Day of Unity, plan to do the following:

- Disseminate materials to congregants at church on Sunday and to congregants and others via any other planned Day of Unity activities (e.g., HIV testing events) to:
  - Promote the Day of Unity.
  - Raise awareness about the Initiative.
  - Explain why HIV is a social justice issue in our community.

- Encourage others (e.g., faith leaders and community members) to become Initiative partners.
- Use social media to post messages about the Day of Unity, the Initiative’s core components, HIV as a social justice issue, and the importance of becoming change agents to combat this epidemic in our communities.
- Encourage local media to share stories about the Day of Unity, HIV as a social justice issue, and the importance of becoming change agents to combat this epidemic in our communities.
- Be sure to promote use of the #DayofUnity hashtag to raise awareness.

INTEGRATING ACTIVITIES THAT ADDRESS HIV AS A SOCIAL JUSTICE ISSUE INTO EXISTING CHURCH PROGRAMS
Experience has taught us that to be most effective, save time and resources, and access a broad range of congregants and community members, it is best to integrate HIV as a social justice issue into existing church activities, as well as church life (e.g., Bible study, youth service activities, food drives, health promotion campaigns). The key reasons to integrate HIV as a social justice issue into your existing church programs and ministries are that you likely

IN THE WORDS OF FAITH LEADERS
Some examples provided by Reverend William Francis of how to integrate HIV activities into existing church programs include hosting HIV testing events after meals for the homeless; integrating HIV prevention information into women’s ministries, men’s ministries, and Bible study groups; and providing HIV testing as part of other screenings in church health fairs, thus normalizing HIV testing.
already have:

- Programs and ministries already focused on fulfilling Christ’s mission of caring for the sick.
- Congregants and community members who are passionate about creating a healthy community and are already invested in programs to support this cause.
- Relationships with local health departments or community organizations to support existing programs or healthy living efforts.

Instead of starting from scratch to develop a new HIV prevention and education program, faith leaders can simply integrate Initiative messages and activities related to addressing HIV as a social justice issue into the good work they are already doing to address other social justice issues. Linking the messages of the Initiative to your work to address other social justice issues will likely help increase people’s understanding and acceptance of HIV as a social justice issue in your community.

HOW TO INTEGRATE ACTIVITIES INTO EXISTING CHURCH PROGRAMS
In order to integrate HIV as a social justice issue into activities that are already part of your church life, we recommend the following:

- **Assess Your Church’s Context.** Consider your theological stance on HIV, your denominational attitudes toward HIV, any previous HIV prevention activities or experience, knowledge of how programs have addressed this issue in the past, and any potential barriers, including personal convictions. This will help you determine how to proceed in integrating HIV activities into existing programs.

- **Meet With Your Program and Health Ministry to Gauge Attitudes.** Be prepared to discuss with church program leaders statistics about the HIV epidemic in the African-American community. If your leaders seem hesitant, let them know that “baby steps” are acceptable, and it may be prudent to start with only a prayer from the pulpit for a few weeks or discussion at men’s and women’s ministries before considering wholesale incorporation of HIV prevention messages into, for example, Bible study, youth meetings, or food drives.

Implementing an HIV prevention or education activity may be new for your church; however, take comfort in knowing that other churches and faith institutions have been where you are, done this work, and been successful. Further recommended ways to incorporate HIV prevention messages, materials, and activities into programs include the following:

- Discuss what HIV is and HIV prevention activities are during Bible studies/cell groups (e.g., women, men, and senior’s discussion groups).
- Explain how HIV is a social justice issue to young congregants during youth meetings; these meetings could include discussion of what HIV is, how it is transmitted, and how it is impacting the African-American community.
- Use fact sheets to talk about HIV as a social justice issue.
- Include a prayer for those living with HIV, highlighting the stigma that they face in food drive activities or other charity work.
- Invite someone living with HIV to come and speak about their experience during church services or at another church event.
- Reach out to local health departments or
other health providers in the community for help. For example, ask the local health department to donate prevention materials, provide on-site testing for congregants during existing events that offer health screenings (e.g., mammograms, BMI assessment, or blood lead screening).

• You may want to formalize relationships with partners, such as health departments, local providers, or community organizations, through development of memorandums of understanding (MOUs), which spell out the responsibilities of each partner.

CONCLUSION
The Spirit of God has anointed us to proclaim the Good News, set the oppressed free, and heal the brokenhearted and sick. As faith leaders, we are empowered to bring hope to those who are hopeless and care for those in need.

By participating in Faith Leader Trainings, preaching from the pulpit, praying publicly, taking collective action, building coalitions, integrating HIV as a social justice issue into existing church life, and participating in the NAACP Day of Unity, we as people of faith can work to end the vicious cycle of HIV in the African-American community.

REFERENCES

These resources have been developed and compiled to support faith leaders, church leadership, and congregations in their efforts to engage in HIV social justice work. This listing is not meant to be comprehensive, but simply an introduction to a few of the many resources that exist. Faith leaders and their churches are encouraged to use the Internet to keep abreast of additional information that will emerge, and to continue to improve and enhance their efforts.

**PASTORAL RESOURCES**

**SAMPLE PRAYERS, SCRIPTURE, SERMONS, AND ALTAR CALLS**

**The Faith in Prevention Training Manual**
Tools for Your HIV Ministry
[www.thebody.com/content/art46215.html](http://www.thebody.com/content/art46215.html)

**The African-American Lectionary**
December’s Big Idea
[www.theafricanamericanlectionary.org/staging/bigideaDecember09.asp](http://www.theafricanamericanlectionary.org/staging/bigideaDecember09.asp)

**SUGGESTED SERMON TOPICS**

Given the significant influence of the Black Church in our community, it is important for you, our faith leaders, to incorporate HIV social justice messages into your sermons as part of the efforts to raise awareness and address the spread of the virus. At the NAACP, we strongly believe that HIV as a social justice issue should be the message, and the sermon the means for delivery.
A FRAMEWORK FOR PREACHING SOCIAL JUSTICE SERMONS: RESPONDING TO HIV

1. Effective social justice preaching requires a commitment from us not only to proclaim the Word, but also to do good works. Social justice messages should be integrated in consistent action that promotes justice within and outside church walls.

2. Effective social justice preaching is not a one-time event. For it to be effective, it needs to be a consistent theme in ministry.

3. Social justice preaching should be theologically sound and grounded in Scripture.

4. Be consistent with the Good News; the priority is empowerment and hope to transform lives, systems, and society as a whole, not condemnation.

5. Social justice is relevant and courageous in its focus on the contemporary challenges that people are facing, such as HIV.

RESOURCES ON SOCIAL JUSTICE-INFORMED MINISTRY (GENERAL)

MODELING HIV MINISTRY AROUND THE GOSPEL

Any effective response to a crisis in the African-American community must involve the Church. This single most important institution, by its inherent nature, exists under the mandate of having a biblical framework for its response. That which is most important to be addressed by the church must ultimately rise to the level of being included in the preaching moment of worship. Thus, we look to Mark 2:1-12 to frame this approach.

A COMMUNITY CRISIS (V. 1)
“When he returned to Capernaum after some days, it was reported that he was at home.”

The foreboding impact of oppression was felt everywhere in Jesus’ everyday life and was framed by the haunting reality of the systematic and institutional Roman oppression. He was a part of a community where great power disparity translated into a sinister spirit of perpetual indifference. Lack of access to the basic necessities of life made his people particularly susceptible to all of the socioeconomic problems of the time. Life in “the shadow of the empire” created an environment of general disease. Similarly, two thousand years later, the disenfranchised ancestors of African slaves in America are grappling with the lingering effects of historic discriminatory practices. We are a community in crisis, desperately in need of salvation from the ills that beset us physically, mentally, and spiritually.

A COLLECTIVE ACTION (V. 3)
“Then some people came, bringing to him a paralyzed man, carried by four of them.”

Consensus building is required for effective community mobilization. The faithful few who brought the paralyzed man to Jesus represent those who decided to stand on faith and act collectively to address the matter at hand. In-depth conversations about the complex issues impacting our people are essential to enhancing consciousness and understanding. When this occurs, consensus can be established with regard to actions required to address our problems. This approach is necessary for us to respond effectively to the HIV epidemic.

A COMMON GOAL (V. 4A)
“And when they could not bring him to Jesus…”

Our people have always turned to God in times of trouble. The paralyzing forces at work amongst our people manifest themselves in many ways. Whether the issue is health care, civil rights, economic opportunity, quality education, housing, gun violence, drug addiction, or mass incarceration, we look to God for guidance. The struggles we have faced and overcome in the past have always incorporated the power of liberation theology into the heart of our “strides toward freedom.” HIV will require no less. Faith is a fundamental part of who we are as a people.
A CROWDED CONGREGATION (V.4B)
“...because of the crowd...”

It is important not to neglect any of those who are in need. Although our churches are often filled to capacity, it is not always the case that those in attendance are in a sanctuary (a safe and loving place) that is filled with the spirit of the teachings of Jesus. Our personal desires for material gain and self-centered advancement are sometimes more prominent than our concern for the suffering masses in our midst. The Church must make sure it does not get in the way of effective HIV responses. We need to be a part of the solution, not a part of the problem.

A COMMITTED FEW (V.4C)
“...they removed the roof above him; ...having dug through it.”

Addressing HIV requires digging through a lot of “isms” and phobias. Leadership around social justice issues is very much dependent upon a nucleus of persons focused on looking critically at what it takes to bring about change. Central to this process is a willingness to embark upon an honest self-assessment of the biases, prejudices, fears, myths, and misunderstandings that represent the barriers to our thinking. With regard to HIV, we as Christian people have to be willing to reexamine our thoughts about the judgment of others within a biblical context. The concentrated effort of many dedicated disciples is needed to wrestle with defining the course for the larger body. The road to freedom has always been led by a minority, not a majority.

A CREATIVE RESPONSE (V. 4D)
“...they let down the mat on which the paralytic lay.”

Our “sanctified imaginations” must be employed in our words and deeds. The answer they were looking for regarding how to get the paralyzed man into Jesus’ presence came when they were able to envision tearing a hole through the established structure. Clearing the way to Jesus will sometimes require “thinking outside of the box.” Throughout our 400-plus years of experience in America, we have had to be radically creative in responding to the dehumanizing evils we have had to endure. With Christ, we have the power to do all things, including changing the impact of HIV in our community. Radical actions have to be driven by a positive purpose and not frustration.

A CHRIST-CENTERED MISSION (V. 5A)
“When Jesus saw their faith...”

God always honors the heart’s desire of those who seek to do the right thing. Jesus recognized and rewarded the faith of those who took action on behalf of the paralyzed man. Everything about the response of the individuals who carried him in the midst of his crisis reflects their God-centeredness. Clearly, their determination was fueled by the belief that Jesus’ power was greater than their problem. With respect to HIV, the Church has to assume the same posture. We know what we need to do, but our fears continue to prevent us from action. In spite of the historical
belief that sickness and disability are the result of sin, the men who intervened on behalf of the paralyzed man rose above any reluctance they might have had. Doing the right thing requires moving beyond self-centeredness. They touched him, they carried him, and they did not let anything stop them from getting him to Jesus. Jesus saw all of them, the one hurting and the ones helping, with faultless and forgiving eyes.

**COMPASSIONATE SAVIOR (V. 5B)**

“...he said to the paralytic, ‘Son, your sins are forgiven.’”

Jesus’ words are affirming, reconciling, and inclusive—not judgmental. Forgiveness is at the heart of everything Jesus did in ministry. The Good News desperately needs to be heard by all of us today, just as it was 2,000 years ago. His mandate for us to practice God’s unconditional love is greater than the divisiveness in the world. As the apostle Paul states in his letter to the church in Rome, “Nothing can separate us from God’s love.” HIV does not discriminate in terms of who it infects, and neither does God discriminate regarding who is loved.

**A CONFLICTED CHURCH (V. 6)**

“Some of the scribes were sitting there, questioning in their hearts.”

When we are not open-minded, we set ourselves up for misunderstanding. In too many instances, the Church has been guilty of not being able to move beyond thinking and traditions that have alienated many of those persons most disproportionately impacted by HIV. Jesus was always willing to open his arms, mind, and heart to all those who sought his healing and transforming presence. Unlike many churches where issues of gender, race, class, nationality, culture, or other characteristics of personhood are considered a legitimate basis for exclusion, Jesus embraced all people. This narrow definition of who is or isn’t within the circle of God’s love was often the thing that created conflict between Jesus and other religious leaders in his own Jewish community.

**A CLARIFYING MESSAGE (V. 9)**

“Which is easier, to say to the paralytic, ‘Your sins are forgiven,’ or to say, ‘Stand up and take your mat and walk’?”

Jesus made it clear that his emphasis was on the quality of the man’s life. The spirit of Jesus’ words challenges us not to let any superficial aspect of a person’s life get in the way of our love for each other. When there is clear evidence that positive change has occurred in any individual, we need to celebrate what has transpired and give God the glory. As is the case with the paralyzed man, an HIV sermon should be empowering and uplifting with no hint of guilt or shame.
A CHANGED LIFE (V. 11)
“I say to you, stand up, take your mat and go to your home.”

The testimonies of people living with HIV need to be heard. The Church needs to create an environment where those who are infected with HIV can come home to a safe place and tell their stories of God’s transforming power. We are all affected by HIV.

PASTORAL COUNSELING
The mind, the need for psychological healing, unprotected sex, infidelity, and IV drug use all increase the risk of HIV infection. If we are not careful, we can respond to those of us who engage in high-risk behaviors with judgment, anger, or blame. To respond with compassion is to recognize what some of the emotional and psychological reasons people engage in risky or self-harming behaviors.

1. Some people are trauma survivors and have dealt with severe experiences of abuse, violence, and neglect. For those persons, drugs or sexual intimacy can be a way of coping with or escaping painful memories.

2. Some people are in difficult situations and have never been given effective ways to cope. Prayer and Bible study are important. People may also need help from a counselor to develop healthy ways of dealing with their challenges.

3. Drug use can lead to an addiction that requires intervention. It is only when we recognize that someone is in physical, emotional, and spiritual pain that we can truly respond with compassion.

4. Risky behaviors can also be a form of passive (indirect) suicide.

5. Young people are more likely to engage in risky behavior as they transition from childhood to adulthood. Also, when violence and danger are a common reality, the idea of a behavior being called risky can seem insignificant.

6. Within the African-American community, there has been a decline in long-term relationships. Sometimes the stress of wanting to have a partner or the reality of having a partner who is abusive can result in individuals compromising their safety and entering into relationships where their sexual health is put at risk.

7. We are living in a time and culture where there is a focus on the moment, while ignoring long-term consequences. We have to encourage our community to dream again and to envision a future beyond today.
SERMON IDEAS FOR NAACP’S NATIONAL DAY OF UNITY
With more than 21,000 churches in the U.S., the Black Church has the power to make a significant impact in the battle against HIV in the African-American community. One way clergy are demonstrating their work in this social justice and health equity movement is by partnering with the NAACP Health Programs Department for our annual NAACP National Day of Unity.

The Day of Unity originated on Sunday, July 8, 2012, prior to the official launch of The Black Church & HIV: The Social Justice Imperative Initiative. The Day of Unity is now celebrated every July. We encourage faith leaders to commemorate this day by preaching their sermons about HIV’s effect on the African-American community using a social justice framework. Pastors can also choose to include other HIV-related activities when celebrating the Day of Unity, such as:

- Collaborate/partner with other churches in their city that may be willing to take an active role in HIV prevention activism.
- Provide free HIV screening opportunities for the congregation and the surrounding community.
- Develop a health ministry that includes HIV in a current health ministry or adds HIV to an existing ministry.
- Promote the Day of Unity using social media channels.

Below we have provided some sermon ideas for addressing HIV that were generated from our discussions with faith leaders. The themes and Scriptures are meant to help inspire your thinking around content for sermons, particularly on the Day of Unity, but also all year round.

POTENTIAL THEMES
- Am I my brother’s keeper? [Genesis 4:8-13]
- Jesus lifted up the “other.” We have to lift each other up. [I 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 issues where others will not go. [Matthew 28]
- Jesus’ command for us to love one another. [John 13:34]
- Jesus’ response to the demon-possessed man while others ran from him. Jesus asked him his name. We have to humanize each other and connect. [Mark 5:1-20]
- Sermon on Jesus’ response to lepers—he healed them, loved them, and risked his comfort to be with them. [Matthew 8:1-3]
- The Good Samaritan. Who is our neighbor? We have a responsibility to help 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

- 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.”
- Luke 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.”
- Psalm 27:14 (KJV), “Wait on the LORD: be of good courage, and he shall strengthen thine heart: wait, I say, on the LORD.”

FAITH AND HIV

AIDS FOUNDATION OF CHICAGO: FAITH RESPONDS TO AIDS
www.aidschicago.org/inside-story/452-prayingfor-the-end-of-aids
(312) 922-2322

The AIDS Foundation of Chicago (AFC) is committed to changing the story of HIV/AIDS. Inside Story aims to take the reader inside that story, to give him/her an intimate look at how AFC, and other Chicago and national organizations, are fighting HIV/AIDS through medical, housing, and support services; cutting-edge research into prevention and treatment methods; and advocacy for stronger HIV/AIDS public policy from legislators.

AIDS INTERFAITH NETWORK
www.aidsinterfaithnetwork.org/
(214) 941-7696
tgasper@aidsinterfaithnetwork.org

AIDS Interfaith Network was created in 1986 by a group of clergy and pastoral and lay counselors who were providing spiritual and emotional support services to persons living with HIV/AIDS.

THE BALM IN GILEAD INC.
www.balmingilead.org/
(804) 644-2256
info@balmingilead.org

The Balm In Gilead develops educational and training programs specifically designed to meet the unique needs of African-American congregations that strive to become community centers for health education and disease prevention.

NATIONAL CONSORTIUM OF BLACK WOMEN IN MINISTRY
www.ncbwim.org/
(847) 328-5649
ncbwim@ncbwim.org

The National Consortium of Black Women in Ministry supports women of color in ministry both
personally and professionally by cultivating communities of African-American women in ministry across the United States and mobilizing them to impact issues affecting the well-being of African-American women.

**NATIONAL WEEK OF PRAYER FOR THE HEALING OF AIDS**
www.nationalweekofprayerforthehealingofaids.org/
(804) 644-2256
info@nationalweekofprayerforthehealingofaids.org

The National Week of Prayer for the Healing of AIDS is a call to prayer for the elimination of HIV/AIDS through prayer, education, advocacy, and service.

**RELIGIOUS INSTITUTE: FAITHFUL VOICES ON SEXUALITY AND RELIGION**
www.religiousinstitute.org/

The Religious Institute is a multi-faith organization dedicated to education, sexual health, and social justice.

**WHITE HOUSE OFFICE OF FAITH-BASED AND NEIGHBORHOOD PARTNERSHIPS**
http://www.whitehouse.gov/administration/eop/ofbnp

The White House Office of Faith-Based and Neighborhood Partnerships forms partnerships between government at all levels and non-profit organizations, both secular and faith-based, to more effectively serve Americans in need.

**VIDEOS**

**AIDSVU VIDEO**
www.youtube.com/watch?v=mGSQ5DYVwrI&feature=player_embedded

This two-minute video shows the reality of the HIV epidemic in the U.S.

**THE GOSPEL OF HEALING**
http://thegospelofhealing.com/

This is a film encouraging Black Churches to create full-service health ministries to eliminate health disparities and reduce the high prevalence of chronic health conditions in the African-American community.