



October 2009

Greetings AIDS Ambassadors!

Thank you for all the work you are doing on the issue of HIV & AIDS. You are the faithful servants in the fields working for a better life for those infected and affected. You are much appreciated.

The following are key pieces of information that, we hope, will inform and strengthen your work in your church, community and annual conference. We begin with a word of greeting from Dr. Don Messer, chair of the UMC Global AIDS Fund Committee.

***To AIDS Ambassadors:***

For three years a woman in rural India went from hospital to hospital and clinic to clinic hoping to get relief from her discomfort and suffering. But when they learned she was HIV-positive, they rejected her, fearful of the surgery required to correct a prolapsed uterine. But when she arrived at the C.A.R.E. Women and Children's Center, initially started in rural Namakkal by a grant from the United Methodist Global AIDS Fund, the women doctors, nurses and staff welcomed her without prejudice or stigmatization. Today she lives life without pain thanks to the medical care she received, and thanks to unseen United Methodists who generously contributed to the Fund.

In Meru, Kenya, a little girl living with disabilities couldn't go to a special school because as her HIV-positive mother declared, "I am too poor to even buy her a toothbrush." But she got into school, thanks to gifts made possible through the United Methodist Global AIDS Fund that were generated by volunteer Ambassadors in our churches. Today 220 vulnerable children are being helped in a community-based, Christ-centered outreach program.

Amid a cornfield in Mzuzu, Malawi, a little crudely built wooden church with only dirt floors, appears in my mind as a great cathedral of hope. When I preached there, I discovered the pastor was helping almost 100 AIDS orphans get nutrition, education and support, thanks to a grant from the United Methodist Global AIDS Fund. Without Ambassadors, speaking in our churches and raising funds, those little children would be in the streets, subject to pedophiles and who knows what else.

Sometimes when we are pressing the pastor for a special Sunday, or making a poster, or sitting for hours addressing envelopes, or asking for just a little money to help, we can despair and think we are not at the heart of God's mission. But in reality, we are! These initial steps make a world of difference, and I can assure you that the woman healed in India, the little children in Kenya, and the many AIDS orphans of Malawi join thousands of others in 33 countries to say "thank you" for caring for what Christ called "the least of these."

—Dr. Donald Messer



**World AIDS Day.** Dec. 1 is designated as World AIDS Day. This year's theme is "Universal Access & Human Rights," Materials for use in local congregations will soon

be available on the UMC Global AIDS Fund website: [www.umglobalaidsfund.org](http://www.umglobalaidsfund.org). For additional materials, visit the website of Ecumenical Advocacy Alliance (EAA), [www.e-alliance.ch/](http://www.e-alliance.ch/). EAA is an international network of churches committed to campaigning together on common concerns.

**National Latino AIDS Awareness Day.** Oct. 15 is the traditional day set aside to highlight AIDS in the Latino community. For information and resources, go to: <http://www.hhs.gov/aidsawarenessdays/days/latino/index.html>.

**U.S. National Plan for AIDS.** Every country receiving funding from the U.S. government for AIDS is required to have an AIDS strategy, although the United States itself doesn't have one. There is a request for input into the process of developing a U.S. AIDS strategy. To see the framework document, go to [http://www.nationalaidsstrategy.org/index.php?option=com\\_content&task=view&id=31](http://www.nationalaidsstrategy.org/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=31).

Listening sessions sponsored by the Coalition for a National AIDS Strategy will be held around the country in order to give input to the White House on what is needed in a comprehensive U.S. plan. Tentative dates and cities follow. If you live in or near one of these cities, you are encouraged to work with your local AIDS organizations on developing a statement

*Tentative dates for community discussions:*

- Minneapolis, Minn. — Friday, Oct. 2
- Albuquerque, N.M. — Friday, Oct. 9
- Houston, Texas — Saturday, Oct. 10
- San Francisco, Calif. — Friday, Oct. 16
- Oakland, Calif. — Saturday, Oct. 17
- Los Angeles, Calif. — Sunday, Oct. 18
- Columbia, S.C. — Monday, Oct. 26
- Puerto Rico — Friday, Nov. 6
- Virgin Islands — Monday, Nov. 9
- Jackson, Miss. — Monday, Nov. 16
- Ft. Lauderdale, Fl. — Friday, Nov. 20
- New York — Friday, Dec. 4

**HIV and AIDS toolkit to be available soon!** The UMC Global AIDS Fund Committee is developing a new resource for local churches and annual conferences to address the AIDS pandemic. The kit will include basic information on HIV and AIDS, a Powerpoint presentation on the UMC Global AIDS Fund, how to work with young people and the role of an AIDS Ambassador. To check this out, go to [www.umglobalaidsfund.org](http://www.umglobalaidsfund.org).

**Ryan White Act update.** On Sept. 30, the U.S. Senate Committee on Health, Education, Labor & Pensions (HELP), passed legislation by unanimous consent to extend the Ryan White program for another four years. Thousands of persons living with HIV and AIDS, including those on AIDS Drug Assistance Programs (ADAP), rely on the Ryan White program for access to HIV primary medical care and supportive services. These include housing, case management, mental health and substance abuse services, and more.

With the approval in the HELP Committee, the bill may now proceed to the full floor of the senate for a vote that will probably occur in the next two weeks. After that, the U.S. House of Representatives must also pass identical legislation. Once both chambers have completed their task, it will go to President Obama for his signature.

Please contact your U.S. senators and ask for full authorization of this bill! To reach your senator, call the Capitol switchboard: (202) 224-3121.

**New Coordinator of Global AIDS Office confirmed.** Eric Goosby, MD, assumed the role of Ambassador at Large and Global AIDS Coordinator with the U.S. Dept. of State in June. He will lead all U.S. government international HIV and AIDS efforts. Ambassador Goosby will oversee implementation of the U.S. President's Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief (PEPFAR), as well as U.S. government engagement with the Global Fund to Fight AIDS, Tuberculosis & Malaria.

Ambassador Goosby has more than 25 years of experience with HIV and AIDS, ranging from his early years treating patients at San Francisco General Hospital when AIDS first emerged, to engagement at the highest level of policy leadership. As the first director of the Ryan White Care Act at the U.S. Dept. of Health & Human Services (DHHS), Ambassador Goosby helped develop HIV and AIDS delivery systems in the United States.

During the Clinton administration, Ambassador Goosby served as deputy director of the White House National AIDS Policy Office and as director of the Office of HIV/AIDS Policy at DHHS. He has long-standing working relationships with leading multilateral organizations, including UNAIDS, the Global Fund and the World Health Organization. (*Source: PEPFAR website: [www.pepfar.gov](http://www.pepfar.gov)*)

**Lighten the Burden III.** The UMC Global AIDS Fund Committee will sponsor a Lighten the Burden III conference **Sept. 30-Oct. 2, 2010, in Dallas, Texas.** Please mark your calendars! This event is for any persons who want to receive up-to-date information and inspiration for their work to fight AIDS. More info is forthcoming.

**Kaiser Family Foundation.** The Kaiser Family Foundation is a non-partisan source of facts, information and analysis for policymakers, the media, the health-care community and the public. Its information is provided free of charge, from the most sophisticated policy research, to basic facts and numbers, to information young people can use to improve their health or elderly people can use to understand their Medicare benefits. It is a great resource for AIDS information: [www.kff.org](http://www.kff.org).

**52 Ways to Create an AIDS-free World!** Dr. Donald Messer has just published a new book that contains excellent action ideas each of us might take to eradicate AIDS in the world. For more information about his book, go to [www.Freshairbooks.com](http://www.Freshairbooks.com).



Please let us know if you have any questions about the items in this newsletter. Your advocacy and faithful witness is a gift to the church and the world!

“I came that you might have life and have it abundantly.” (John 10:10)

Peace to you,

Linda Bales Todd, [lbales@umc-gbcs.org](mailto:lbales@umc-gbcs.org), 202-488-5649



The General Board of Church and Society  
100 Maryland Avenue, NE  
Washington, DC 20002

202-488-5600  
FAX 202-488-5619  
Order Resources  
1-800-967-7000  
[www.umc-gbcs.org](http://www.umc-gbcs.org)