



# **No More Turning Away: Responding to AIDS**

## **Strategy Development Document**

**Social Justice & Advocacy Board  
Anglican Diocese of Toronto**

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# No More Turning Away: Responding to AIDS

## Introduction

The Synod of the Diocese of Toronto has identified HIV/AIDS as a major focus for both advocacy and parish outreach work. This has led to the development of this document, which sets out a proposed strategy for the Diocese on how we can work together to address the challenges faced by people who are HIV-positive or who have AIDS.

The Diocesan Council of the Diocese of Toronto has approved strategy papers on how to alleviate child poverty and homelessness, our two other priority areas for education and advocacy (to see both strategy papers, visit [www.toronto.anglican.ca/sjab](http://www.toronto.anglican.ca/sjab), then select Advocacy Resources from the left-hand side menu). Some elements of those papers are also incorporated in this document, because they involve similar issues.

## Mission and Vision of the Diocese

Our response to HIV/AIDS is part of the larger vision of the diocese. The mission of the Diocese of Toronto is to worship God and proclaim Jesus Christ in the power of the Holy Spirit and to embody – in word and action – God’s reconciling love, justice, and liberation, through which knowledge of God’s reign is extended.

In our baptismal covenant, each of us has vowed to seek and serve Christ in all persons, to strive for justice and to respect the dignity of every human being. At the core of our Christian community is our ministry on behalf of those who are marginalized and in need. Christ tells us, “Whatever you did for one of the least of these, you did it unto me” (Matthew 25:40).

In our diocese we are building communities of hope and compassion through three distinct but complementary strategies:

### Making our Anglican life seeker friendly [Matthew 6:19-21, Luke 5:38, Luke 14:28-30]

- Being, and being seen to be, welcoming to and supportive of all individuals in our communities who seek spiritual, social and/or physical nurturing.
- Being seen as a beacon of light, of good news and celebration, of friendship and caring, to all who look for a source of affirmation and joy amidst the noise of a modern world.

### Creating distinct and supportive ministries which respond to and reflect the diversity of our society [Matthew 28.1, Galatians 3:28]

- Sponsoring and encouraging ministries which are, and are seen to be, supportive of diverse cultural communities.
- Sponsoring and encouraging new ways of ministry which resonate with young people and speak to young seekers.

- Renewing our ministry around that which is sacred to reflect the key segments of our society.

Advocating Christ's message to influence social policy and social realities [Matthew 5:1-12, Luke 4:17-19, Micah 6:8]

- Being, and being seen to be, a courageous and persuasive voice for the homeless, the poor and the marginalized.
- Creating and carrying out ministries which address the needs of the homeless and the poor across our Diocese as living examples of Christ working among us.

Our mission and our strategies are based on the recognition that as Christians, we are called to be Christ's hands and voice, working together to create a society which provides acceptance, affirmation and a life with dignity to all persons. One of the tasks of the church (and of our Diocese, and the Social Justice and Advocacy Board) is to challenge our society about the way in which it treats people with HIV/AIDS.

### **The reality of HIV/AIDS**

Can our minds grasp the enormity of suffering and death wrapped up in those four letters, AIDS?

By the end of 2005, 25 million people had died of AIDS, 38.6 million were living with HIV, and an estimated 15 million children were left orphaned.<sup>1</sup> The depth of this human tragedy presents an immense challenge to the international community and speaks to us directly as people of faith.

While significant advances have been made in countering the pandemic, AIDS continues to devastate the lives of millions of people around the world. It is estimated that about 2.8 million people died from AIDS in the less-developed world in 2005.<sup>2</sup> HIV/AIDS continues to spread around the world. Our minds may immediately think "Africa" when we hear the word AIDS, because that region is the global epicentre of the AIDS pandemic, with over 60 percent of all HIV-positive people in the world. Yet this is a global crisis. While infection rates within the Sub-Saharan regions of Africa seem to be slowing, HIV infection rates are increasing in Eastern Europe, Central Asia and the Oceania regions of the world. Some 8.3 million people were living with HIV in Asia at the end of 2005. Meanwhile AIDS is now the leading cause of death among adults in the Caribbean, claiming an estimated 27,000 lives in 2005.<sup>3</sup>

The United Nations Report on the AIDS pandemic recorded that in 2005, people living with HIV/AIDS included:

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<sup>1</sup> 2006 Report on the Global AIDS Epidemic, UNAIDS, [http://data.unaids.org/pub/GlobalReport/2006/2006\\_GR-ExecutiveSummary\\_en.pdf](http://data.unaids.org/pub/GlobalReport/2006/2006_GR-ExecutiveSummary_en.pdf)

<sup>2</sup> "Keep up AIDS fight, UN urged", The Globe and Mail, May 31, 2006.

<sup>3</sup> 2006 Report on the Global AIDS Epidemic, UNAIDS.

<b>Region of the world</b>	<b>People living with HIV/AIDS</b>
Sub-Saharan Africa	24.5 million
Asia	8.3 million
Eastern Europe and Central Asia	1.5 million
Caribbean	330,000
Latin America	1.6 million
North America, Western and Central Europe	2.0 million
Middle East and North Africa	440,000
Oceania	78,000

This is not a far-away problem. It is right on our own doorsteps. Within Canada, an estimated 56,000 Canadians live with HIV/AIDS, and it is believed that approximately 30% of them do not know they have the AIDS virus. In 2003, newly diagnosed HIV-positive cases rose 13% to 2,482, pointing to an ominous trend of increasing infections among Canadians. A quarter of new AIDS cases are women.

Ontario, with 24,734 HIV-positive test reports, has the highest number of people living with HIV/AIDS in Canada. Toronto comprises over 60% of all HIV positive test results in the province. Figures for 2004 calculate that 15,696 people have tested positive for HIV in Toronto since 1985.

### **The face of HIV/AIDS**

On June 25, 1981, the first cases of what would become known as AIDS were diagnosed in North America. From the very beginning, HIV/AIDS has been shrouded with fear, stigma and discrimination. Despite massive educational efforts, HIV/AIDS is still regarded by many as a disease of shame. HIV-positive people face social challenges of accessing appropriate and confidential health care services, abandonment by family and friends, religious messages of alienation and condemnation, along with a diminished quality of life and income security due to the chronic and debilitating effects of HIV/AIDS.

Millions of Christians are among those affected, challenging us to take the well-known words in the Gospel of Matthew to heart: "I was sick and you took care of me...whenever you did this for one of the least important of these brothers of mine, you did it for me" (Matthew 25: 36, 40).

### **Creating change**

The sheer size and scope of the HIV/AIDS pandemic may strike us as overwhelming. It can seem at times that nothing we do can make a difference. Yet the progress made so far in the treatment of HIV/AIDS and society's response to the social and human rights issues involved are real signs of hope. We have come a long way from the days when some parishes refused to put up posters saying, "Our Church has AIDS."

Hope can also be seen in the fact that today, as never before, global leaders from all sectors of society are joining together to urge governments, development agencies and all of us to step up the fight against AIDS. We are all part of the HIV/AIDS solution. Each of us

has a role to play. The National HIV/AIDS Working Group<sup>4</sup> wrote in 1990, *As HIV positive people suffer, so do we the church suffer. As they are healed, so are we.*

The Ecumenical Advocacy Alliance of the World Council of Churches<sup>5</sup> suggests that at international, national and local levels, change begins when we strive for the following:

- 1) Involving people living with HIV, especially women and youth, in all elements of AIDS policy and program design.
- 2) Combating stigma and discrimination wherever they are found.
- 3) Protecting and promoting human rights, which can positively impact the lives of those living with HIV.
- 4) Raising awareness about HIV/AIDS and speaking candidly about the facts of this disease.
- 5) Joining other communities advocating for the needs of those living with HIV/AIDS.
- 6) Participating and partnering with organizations that provide compassionate and comprehensive care for persons living with HIV/AIDS.

In living out the mission and vision of the Diocese, we can, as a faith community, bring about change by:

**Supporting change abroad:** Support the efforts of our national Anglican organization for promoting development worldwide, the Primate's World Relief and Development Fund (PWRDF). Its "Partnership for Life: For a Generation Without AIDS" program represents an inspiring example of Anglican response to AIDS. Created in response to a call for action by Anglican leaders in Africa, this initiative has done a great deal to educate and mobilize Anglicans in response to AIDS. It challenges Canadian Anglicans to pledge their financial support, raise awareness, pray for our development partners and people infected and affected by HIV/AIDS, and urge our government to be an agent for positive change.

Many Anglicans have responded in faith, raising \$2.3 million for the Partnership for Life program. These funds support community-based education about HIV and AIDS in Africa, Latin America, Asia and Canada. The program also provides volunteers who help the sick, care for orphans, advocate for health care, support farmers, and much more. Visit [www.partnershipforlife.ca](http://www.partnershipforlife.ca) to learn more.

**Supporting change within our diocese:** Action to help those living with HIV/AIDS starts with awareness. Attend HIV/AIDS awareness events in your community. Learn about local, national and international AIDS service organizations, and learn about faith-based HIV/AIDS-related groups, activities and resources.

The Canadian AIDS Society ([www.cdn aids.ca](http://www.cdn aids.ca)), The Ontario AIDS Network ([www.ontarioaidsnetwork.on.ca](http://www.ontarioaidsnetwork.on.ca)), and The AIDS Committee of Toronto ([www.actoronto.org](http://www.actoronto.org)) can help you learn more about HIV/AIDS.

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<sup>4</sup> In the mid 1980's, The National HIV/AIDS Working Group was formed by the national office of the Anglican Church to advise the church on HIV/AIDS related matters and to create HIV/AIDS educational materials. The Working Group was discontinued in the early 1990's.

<sup>5</sup> The Ecumenical Advocacy Alliance is a broad international network of Christian churches and organizations cooperating in advocacy on global trade and HIV/AIDS.

Within our diocese, there are plenty of opportunities for getting involved. Consider donating time and commitment to organizations such as:

The Philip Aziz Centre. The Diocese of Toronto has partnered with this hospice to provide spiritual and religious care to HIV-positive families. One of the Centre's unique services is a spiritual support group for women living with HIV and AIDS. Volunteers are needed to do a wide range of activities, including personal care, spiritual support, and respite for caregivers. To learn more, visit [www.philipazizcentre.ca](http://www.philipazizcentre.ca) or call (416) 363-9196.

The Teresa Group. This community-based volunteer organization supports families and children living with HIV/AIDS. It was founded in the early 1990s through the work of parishioners at St. Clement's Anglican Church with ACW support. The organization has expanded its programming to provide support groups for children living in HIV-positive families, as well as for HIV-positive pregnant mothers, and mothers of newborns and toddlers. Visit [www.teresagroup.ca](http://www.teresagroup.ca) for details.

Volunteer opportunities within the Diocese of Toronto include our partnership with the Grahamstown Diocese in South Africa. "Last year in the Diocese of Grahamstown, my wife Ellen and I visited schools, an orphanage, support programs, pastors and medical staff," says Bishop Colin Johnson. "The church is at the forefront of pastoral and practical care for AIDS victims. We were both appalled by the circumstances they live with and awed by the spontaneous joy, hope and commitment to life that we saw. It renewed our faith and challenged our personal commitment to help."<sup>6</sup>

**Supporting change within your parish:** Actions taken by individuals and parish groups gather momentum over time and create greater change when the organization or faith community supports, celebrates and reinforces the actions and activities of the individual. Faith communities can support and facilitate change by highlighting HIV/AIDS. Here are some suggestions:

- Hold an educational event at your parish through which more people can learn about HIV/AIDS.
- World AIDS Day, December 1, could be your focus for an educational event. The World AIDS Campaign, sponsor of World AIDS Day, is also inviting people of faith to mark December 3, the first Sunday of Advent, as a time to reflect, pray and learn about the issues involved in the HIV/AIDS pandemic ([www.e-alliance.ch/media/AdventLiturgy.doc](http://www.e-alliance.ch/media/AdventLiturgy.doc)).
- Encourage your parish to support local, national and international HIV/AIDS programs as part of its outreach program.
- What would be your parish's "theology of mission or outreach" for welcoming people with HIV/AIDS into your church? How can you change the "culture" of your parish so that it could become known as a safe and supportive place to enter?
- Could your church provide office or meeting space for local AIDS programs and/or organizations?

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<sup>6</sup> "How will we respond to HIV/AIDS?" Diocese of Toronto website news, Sept.12, 2006

**Prayer and worship:** Incorporate the concerns of HIV/AIDS into the prayer, intercession and worship life of your parish. Liturgies and other worship resources have been developed by many church organizations and can be used as educational aids for congregations. Praying for people with HIV/AIDS and for organizations working to help them can be our most powerful Christian witness to breaking down the barriers of ignorance, stigma, fear and discrimination. Resources are available at:

- 1) Partnership for Life: For a Generation Without AIDS; [www.partnershipforlife.ca](http://www.partnershipforlife.ca)
- 2) Ecumenical Advocacy Alliance; [www.e-alliance.ch](http://www.e-alliance.ch)
- 3) Anglican Communion Office: HIV/AIDS Network; [www.aco.org/hivaids/index.cfm](http://www.aco.org/hivaids/index.cfm)

**Engaging in Advocacy:** If we choose to, we can mobilize the necessary resources and political will to address the structural issues that contribute to the spread of AIDS. “As the church, we can break the silence, stigma and discrimination,” notes Bishop Johnson. “We can advocate for enhanced AIDS prevention, care, and treatment. We can address the very specific social and economic vulnerabilities and discrimination against women and girls.”

**AIDS Advocacy Fact Sheets** - The Canadian Council of Churches (which includes the Anglican Church of Canada) sent Prime Minister Harper a follow-up letter in October 2006 about six areas for government action. The six areas include addressing: 1) bilateral and multilateral debts; 2) cancellation of debt; 3) keeping our financial promise; 4) treatment; 5) women and children; and, 6) refugees and immigrants. These action priorities are explained in five fact sheets with a description of the issue, as well as ideas about what Canada and Canadians can do to make a difference. Use these to inform yourself, your family, your community and your church. Visit <http://www.partnershipforlife.ca/act/advocacy> to learn more.

### **Examples of Anglican action**

Our diocese has been involved in the AIDS issue in many ways, and for many years. The Rev. Canon Douglas Graydon, Coordinator of Chaplaincy Services, utilizes his 15 years of experience working with the HIV/AIDS community by serving as a resource person to parishes and individuals on the issue and possible ways to respond. He served on the planning committee for the International AIDS Conference held in August 2006, and co-led a workshop about AIDS and our Anglican response at the 2006 diocesan Outreach Networking Conference.

Here are a few examples of how parishes and Anglican groups in our diocese are responding to AIDS:

- The board of the diocesan **Anglican Church Women (ACW)** is helping to fund a video by a Peterborough-based agency called PARN, the Community AIDS Resource Network. The video involves local women who are HIV-positive talking about their experience.
- The diocesan ACW also supports **The Teresa Group**, helping them to provide assistance and emotional support, financial aid, group support for children, youth, parents and caregivers living with or affected by HIV/AIDS. The group also supports mothers who get together monthly to talk about daily issues they face, providing support to each other.

- **LOFT Community Services**, a FaithWorks-supported organization in which Anglicans play an active role, operates McEwan Housing and Support Services for homeless people coping with HIV, or issues of mental health or substance abuse. Housing and personal support services are provided for 15 people, while another 50 people living in the community are helped with a range of personal needs.
- Supported by a ministry development grant from the Trent-Durham Episcopal area, Doug Willoughby is organizing an HIV/AIDS Support Group at **St. Paul's on-the-Hill, Pickering**. "There's not a whole lot of support in the region," says Mr. Willoughby, who is HIV-positive himself. "I'd like to begin an HIV/AIDS healing service. In the fall, I am running an HIV 101 course, which talks about the basics of what HIV is, what AIDS means, what's the difference, the progression from HIV infection to AIDS, how you contract HIV, how it is not transmitted."<sup>7</sup>
- **Holy Trinity, Thornhill** is twinned with the parish of St. Martin's by-the-Sea in the town of Gonubie in the Diocese of Grahamstown, South Africa. Through this relationship members of Holy Trinity have learned about the challenges faced by St. Martin's in its outreach work to those affected by HIV/AIDS. The parish has sent some funds to help with outreach work for Gonubie residents living with AIDS.
- **St. Peter's, Cobourg** has twinned with the parish of St. Mark's in Mzuzu, Malawi, a parish which helps feed 250 children who have lost their parents to AIDS. St. Peter's provides funding to help keep this vital food program going, and will expand the orphan care initiative to include health care and education. "The people of St. Peter's, Cobourg have for some time felt the need to respond to the suffering of our AIDS-affected brothers and sisters in Northern Malawi," says Colin Tunpenny, co-coordinator of St. Peter's Mzuzu Planning Committee. "At a time when we as Anglicans may sometimes feel divided by issues, here is a real opportunity to demonstrate the unity and the practical nature of our global Christian faith. I was in Malawi at St. Mark's in 2005, and was thrilled to see how our support from St. Peter's is helping orphan children, and is encouraging Father Chifisi and his parish community."
- Anglicans were among the 15,000 people from around the world who took part in the **International AIDS Conference** in Toronto August 13-18, 2006. Anglicans were involved in a variety of ways. The Diocese of Toronto and the Cathedral Church of St. James hosted a multi-faith service on August 15 to celebrate the spirit of humanity within a world of HIV/AIDS, attended by over 600 people.  
Many parishes used worship resources sent by Bishop Johnson on Sunday, August 13, the first day of the conference. "The teachings and witness of Jesus compel us all to minister to those who are in need," said Bishop Johnson in his letter to parishes. "As Jesus reached out to those who were marginalized and suffered, so shall we. I invite your prayers, conviction and commitment to bring Christ's healing presence into a world which suffers under the burden of HIV/AIDS."
- **St. Philip's on-the-Hill, Unionville** raised \$16,000 from its recent Outreach walk-a-thon for the Stephen Lewis Foundation and the Primate's World Relief and Development Fund. Three parish members, including the Rev. Canon Philip Bristow, went to Tanzania in August 2006, on a two-week mission to launch the church's

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<sup>7</sup> "Anglicans reach out to people living with HIV/AIDS", by Henrieta Paukov, Diocese of Toronto website news, Aug. 14, 2006.



partnership with the parish of Lugala. Part of that partnership ministry is to support local HIV/AIDS programming.

- **The Primate's Fund Partnership for Life** program has a photo exhibit called "Facing AIDS, Facing Reality" that is touring Canada. Parishes and local communities can borrow it. Visit <http://www.partnershipforlife.ca/act/photo-exhibit/> for details. The Primate's Fund also has a Ribbon of Hope that can be borrowed. It is made up of 600 squares of silk-screened denim patches marked with individual prayers, concerns and memorials sewn together to form one great ribbon to remember friends and families who have lost loved ones and those currently infected by HIV/AIDS. For details, see <http://www.partnershipforlife.ca/act/ribbon-of-hope/>.

### **Milestones and measures of progress**

Our current activities focus on education and awareness raising, following the suggestions outlined earlier in this paper. Discussion on broader action by our diocese to encourage increased involvement by Anglicans and their parishes on HIV/AIDS related activity, including involvement in advocacy efforts, is just beginning.

One milestone toward increased involvement would involve the establishment of a diocesan working group on HIV/AIDS by October 2007. An initial consultation with AIDS community partners will be held by April 2007.