

KENTUCKY COUNCIL OF CHURCHES

Policy Statement on AIDS

Adopted by the 43rd Annual Assembly, October 24, 1990

The AIDS/HIV epidemic has polarized our society and broken the church, the Body of Christ. Deep-rooted fear and prejudice have exploited this tragedy and caused painful alienation for those who have the virus. Some in the church have deepened this pain by asserting that HIV is God's judgment upon homosexuals and drug users.

It is the responsibility of the church to respond in compassion to those who have AIDS or carry the HIV, as well as their families and friends. Throughout his ministry, Jesus reached out to the lepers, those first-century outcasts who were discarded from society because of a disease. Today, Aids is our leprosy. Leprosy is not easily transmitted while AIDS is even more difficult to transmit. And yet society continues to discriminate against those who have AIDS and those who test HIV positive.

The Kentucky Council of Churches does not seek to pass judgment upon those with the virus. If the church is to be faithful to our calling to be followers of Christ, we must seek ways to promote reconciliation and healing for our society. We are not allowed the luxury of ignoring this epidemic, for to do so would be to allow injustice to breed and grow. The purpose of the church is to proclaim the Good News of Jesus Christ to all people. In today's world, this cannot exclude those with AIDS/HIV.

THE KENTUCKY COUNCIL OF CHURCHES calls upon all Christians to learn the facts about AIDS/HIV. Education programs in the local congregation for the wider community can prevent the spread of the disease and alleviate some of the unfounded fears and prejudices that surround this disease and those who carry the virus. In addition we call for the discipline of constant prayer for the control of this devastating disease and for the spiritual wholeness of those whose lives are affected by it.

We exhort ministers and other church leaders to implement caring and compassionate ministries with those carrying the virus, their friends and family members. Ministers are encouraged to proclaim the church's responsibility to all who suffer and to call attention to the alienation being borne by those with AIDS/HIV. A congregation which welcomes those with this virus provides a strong witness to the rest of the community that God does not abandon those who suffer with AIDS/HIV.

We call upon legislators to enact legislation which prohibits discrimination against those with AIDS/HIV in housing, medical benefits, and other rights to which all citizens of the Commonwealth of Kentucky and the United States of America are entitled. In addition, we support education for the public and programs to make available affordable medical treatment and custodial care where it is needed.

We celebrate a God who reaches out to all those who suffer and are burdened by injustice; and we pray that we may be faithful in our attempts to be like Jesus in ministering to those who society has ignored and rejected.