



THIS IS MY TESTIMONY

By: ARLENE

LET THE REDEEMED OF THE LORD SAY SO, WHO HE HATH REDEEMED FROM THE HAND OF THE ENEMY...(Psalms 107:2) Giving honor to my Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ and all the saints of the most high God. It is truly an honor and privilege to share my testimony with you.

Terrence and I met at our place of employment. We worked at a drug rehabilitation center in Harlem. Terrence was a supervisor in the health and safety department and I was as an intake counselor. After dating for a year, we decided to get married. Both of us had been married and divorced. During our second try at marriage, we were more mature and therefore excited about our future together.

Terrence used to be an intravenous drug user and had been clean for four years when we met. He was a graduate of a program at our place of employment. In October of 1987, Terrence became ill. He had cold-like symptoms and was being treated for bronchitis. Shortly afterwards, he collapsed. He was rushed to Harlem Hospital where he was diagnosed with full blown AIDS. During that time, I was 28 years old and 9 months pregnant with two children at home. After my husband's diagnosis, I was tested and the result revealed that I was HIV positive. Eventually, I was admitted into St. Lukes Hospital because my pregnancy was two weeks overdue. I was devastated and afraid, not just for myself, but also for my husband who I thought would never see his new baby. I just couldn't believe this was happening to ME! I went numb and felt so alone. I was ashamed and became isolated. I didn't want to tell my mother or any family member and I definitely wasn't going to share THIS news with friends or acquaintances.

At that time, most of my professional work experience was in hospitals and drug rehabilitation centers. I had witnessed how people who had disclosed the illness were ostracized and discriminated against by the staff, other patients, their friends and family.

I cried all of the time and couldn't stop thinking that I was being punished by God! I know no words that can express those very dark days of my life. My husband recovered enough to visit me at St. Lukes. He was accompanied by a family member we trusted. He was hospitalized for over 3 weeks and had lost 90 lbs. The doctors said that I was so overwhelmed with stress and tension, they feared for the baby's safety. My labor was induced and my son was delivered by c-section. My baby boy was diagnosed at birth with HIV. A year and a half later, we were told he had full blown AIDS and would not live to be 5-years-old, and if he lived that long, he would be very sick. At that time, the only medication being administered was AZT. It was still in the experimental stage and was not given to infants. When Terrence discovered he had infected not only his wife, but his new born son, he literally gave up on life and began drinking heavily.

Even today as I look back to share what my Savior has brought me through, it brings tears to my eyes. My husband has been with the Lord for more than ten years now. I remember before Terrence passed he went to see a Priest in Harlem and that Priest told him that he was being punished by God for his sins and that he was doomed. After that, Terrence wanted to commit suicide and started drinking even more. My husband didn't die from the opportunistic infections that one dies from when the immune system is no longer functioning, instead he died from malnutrition and bacteria that sets in when a person starves themselves. His doctors knew he was drinking and told us that vodka wouldn't hurt him since he was dying anyway. In my heart, I knew that wasn't true. Today, studies show that drugs and alcohol speeds up the disease and weakens the body. Therefore, I cannot express enough the importance of HIV/AIDS education and loving support. My life has changed so much since October of 1987. It has been one big roller coaster ride and God has brought my family and me a mighty long way. God has taught me how to trust in Him and Him only. He has taught me the true value of family and friends. He has taught me to cherish His word. "He sent His word and healed them, and delivered them from their destruction." (Psalm 107:20).

In 1989, I moved from New York to Los Angeles. I ran from the faces who knew my husband and knew what had sent him to an early grave. People would actually stare at me as though they had seen a ghost. I desperately wanted to disappear. My children and I moved in with friends when we first arrived to Los Angeles. I told no one about my situation and started abusing illicit drugs. One

day I went to the store to buy a pack of zig-zags rolling paper so I could smoke a bag of marijuana I had just purchased and saw a poster advertising a new church opening in the neighborhood. The only thing I remember about the poster was that the church was of the Apostolic faith. I had attended an Apostolic church when I lived in New York and the following Sunday decided to attend the service. At that time, I believed I was dying and did not want to go to hell. I knew I had not lived my life according to the Bible. I had had premarital sex with my husband and was abusing drugs. I believed I became infected because I was being punished by God. So, since I was going to die soon, I wanted to try to make amends with the Lord by going to church. It never occurred to me that I would find life there.

Ministering to those who are dealing with an affliction is something everyone cannot do. I thank God that there are some people who are sensitive to the masses. The men and women of God He placed in my life have truly been an inspiration to me. When I discovered that God is a forgiving God and that He indeed loves me, it totally changed my life. The first church I joined in Los Angeles was Fruit of the Vine Ministries pastored by Dr. Lillie Gibson. When I told her about my diagnosis, she put her arms around me and held me as if I was her own child and began ministering to me. She told me that every "sickness is not unto death" (John 11:4). Wow! That was the best news I had ever heard. At that moment, I no longer felt afraid and I knew I wasn't alone.

Then the Lord introduced me to Dr. Beverly "BAM" Crawford founder of the Bible Enrichment Fellowship International Church. One evening, Dr. Crawford was invited to attend an AIDS support group meeting I was a part of. On that night, we were grieving for three young ladies who had died a week apart from each other. Dr. Crawford took off her shoes, sat on the floor with the group and started ministering to us. I knew that the Holy Spirit was speaking directly to me.

Every word she said confirmed in me what needed to be done in this community of AIDS. The church plays a very important role in this epidemic and should be a place of refuge. We had no Jesus Christ centered support groups and I knew in my heart it was something that was desperately needed. That's when the Lord revealed to me REJOICE OUTREACH. I am the founder of Rejoice Outreach, a Christian based support network for people infected and affected by HIV or AIDS.

My son born HIV positive is now 12 years old. He has never really been sick except for the chicken pox. He earns good grades, is an all American athlete and won the MVP award for his little league football team. Presently, doctors can not find a trace of the disease in his blood. If only my husband could have lived to see him play first-string quarterback. "Whose report are you going to believe?" (Isaiah 53:1) My Bible states that in the Book of James 5:14-15 "If there is any sick among you? Let him call for the elders of the church; and let them pray over him, anointing him with oil in the name of the Lord; and the prayer of faith shall save the sick, and the Lord shall raise him up; and if he hath committed sins, they shall be forgiven him..." But how can you call on a Bishop, Pastor, elder or evangelist if they are afraid to say the word AIDS unless they are trying to scare you into holiness!

Glory be to the most High God. I love Him. Don't you? I have now been living with AIDS for 12 1/2 years. Medicines do not work for everyone. I am on a minimum amount of medicine and I have the best medical doctors on the west coast. Please pray for my strength in the Lord. And please, please use this package designed for you.

In Christ Always,

ARLENE

P.S. I want to acknowledge and thank Dr. Lillie Gibson, Dr. Beverly Crawford, Reverend William M. Campbell and Bishop Noel N. Jones. "Because of the GOD in you I live."



THIS IS MY TESTIMONY

By: REVEREND ELDER CLAUDE E. BOWEN
Pastor/Founder Unity Fellowship Church-Riverside

As a minister and pastor living with HIV, it is necessary to draw on my own faith in God for inner strength and peace in order to assist others living with the virus or have someone in their family who is infected. God is bigger than any disease or discomfort that my body may ever experience and my understanding and belief that my Spirit can't be affected helps me take the nine (9) pills twice daily without much thought.

I don't give power to the virus and trust that the knowledge God gave the scientist to develop the medicine is just what my body needs. Part of my daily meditation is to separate my spiritual being from the physical for treatment through prayer knowing my physical being will align itself to the peace I find through my spiritual treatment.

I am able to help others through this process first by acknowledging that we are all a part of the "I Am That I Am" and honoring each individual where they are without judging who they are or trying to assess why they have come to this point in their lives. It is much easier to help another when the person is allowed to be who they are. In order to treat an individual the entire person must be treated. That means you demonstrate compassion for the person and everything that the person is dealing with. My honesty about my sero-status often helps others to open up and talk about their situation. Getting people to talk about their fears and reservations around the virus is the first step in helping them to be tested and/or get the medical attention they need. This leads to helping them take a close look at self, how they really view themselves and what they feel about others and their relationship with family and friends.

It is my sincere belief that emotional and spiritual well-being is essential in the healing process. Many of our loved ones have made transition (died) from the fear of being rejected and being left

alone. The faith community has made too many people feel unwelcome by labeling them and making the statement that HIV/AIDS is "God's Punishment". Many of these people have families that are caught in the crossfire of what their church teaches about the virus and morality and their own heartfelt love for a son, brother, uncle, father, sister or mother.

I must meet all of God's creation with love and as much as possible help them to understand that they are a valued member of God's unconditional love. Experiencing rejection firsthand, I am sensitive to the needs of all people that God sends my way. It is my duty to demonstrate a love that is available to all – a Love that is deeper than that of a mother and stronger than any human bond could ever produce.

My peace comes from within and it is my belief that God dwells within me and that gives me power. Power that HIV/AIDS can't take.



THIS IS MY TESTIMONY

By: AVA GARDNER-SHIPPI

Life for me has been loving and complete. I've been in the church all of my life. My parents were active in the church and they raised my brother and I to believe that God has the answers to all of life's problems.

I have a young daughter and our lives were full of love and compassion. She is my joy and I center everything in my life around her. Several years ago, I was taking care of my daughter, attending college, working a full-time job and going to church twice a week. At that time, I was attending a class designed to enhance ministry, because I was an aspiring missionary.

It was in this class, that I became acquainted with a man who would later become my husband. He was well versed in the scriptures, musically gifted and could sing me into pure happiness. He was very nice to me and respectful. He appeared to be sincere about his love for God and his own calling as a Minister.

We married a short time later. That was when everything that I thought I knew about this God-fearing man changed. He became verbally and mentally abusive. He began to act mysteriously. He was always sneaking around and disappearing for hours at a time. I prayed to my God for strength and understanding. But soon his web of secrecy would begin to unravel. I began to notice that during church service, although he would always preach on his appointed days, there were days when he would feel physically weak and run down. He knew why he was feeling this way but he would not tell me why. I later learned that my husband had been leading a double life. He was having sex with men and had exposed me to HIV, the virus that causes AIDS. He would later confess that he had infected me on purpose with the virus because he didn't want to die alone!!!

This was the most devastating news I had ever received. Why would he hurt me like this? I loved him! We were Christians. I

loved God. How could He let this happen? What about my daughter? Who would be there for her? Help me God, please!

After learning that I was infected with HIV, I experienced more emotions than I could even count. My marriage had not been a marriage. And I could not tell anyone because of the fear and stigma aimed at people who have HIV/AIDS. But then I realized that there was someone that I could tell. That someone was God. I told God everything!! I cried! I prayed! I cried, and I cried. And then, I PRAYED! I felt dirty, ashamed. I was now an evangelist in the church, and I had AIDS – how could this be? I didn't know what to do. I didn't want the rejection that came along with having HIV/AIDS.

But I quickly realized that God was still God and His love for me was enough to cover all of my insecurities and fears. My faith became stronger than it was before and I realized that God was my only hope and my constant strength.

Through God, I was able to forgive my husband for his actions toward me, and became his caregiver until his death.

A short time later, I began to have my own battles with HIV/AIDS. Feeling alone, angry, betrayed and abandoned, I was afraid to let my church know the truth about my husband's death and my illness, so I kept it all a secret. I kept it a secret until the doctors told me that I had a short time to live and that I needed to prepare myself. Knowing this, I decided to tell my church because I needed their support and prayers. But most of all, I wanted their love. To my surprise, they embraced me with their love and prayers. And each time I would become ill, it was assuring to know that the church was praying for me. I believe God has spiritually and mentally healed my body many times because of the prayers of the church.

I believe that churches play an important role in the HIV/AIDS crisis. When there is nothing else, there is God! The church can promote healing, love, understanding and fellowship. With Christ, all things are possible!

I am a living miracle of what God can do with someone with AIDS. I've lost nothing and have gained eternal life.

To God be the Glory!
Evangelist Ava Gardner-Shipp



THIS IS MY TESTIMONY

By: JOSEPH R. VAVASSEUR

You know, I was a little hesitant about sharing my testimony because of the pain I would have to reflect back on. But then I thought, my story should be told and I pray that sharing what my life was like, and the way it is now, will somehow be valuable to those seeking any kind of assistance.

I was born the youngest of eight children in New Orleans, Louisiana. I was raised in a very religious household during a time when the two greatest assets to Black folks living in the South were God and family. When I was a child, my mother was very ill. By the time I turned five years old, she was restricted to a wheelchair. She was always in pain and used to beg God to take her life so the pain would go away. My mother was very religious and prayed to the Lord everyday and taught her kids to pray everyday as well. However, whenever I heard her pray that prayer, I became angry with the Lord. Why did my mother who was my best friend, have to be in so much pain? Where was His attention, sense of fairness and goodwill? So I grew up in a household where pain and suffering was a way of life, and because of that, as a child, my spirit was broken.

At that time, I didn't think things could get any worse, but they did. When my grandmother died, I was devastated. Then, my older sister was murdered. My parents never fully recovered from losing their daughter and shortly afterward, my mother became ill, was hospitalized, contracted pneumonia and died. That was it for me! I was totally crushed. There was just too much pain, sorrow, sadness and death in my life. My brain collapsed, my heart exploded and my emotions went numb. I felt helpless and hopeless. The only strength I had was to resent and doubt God. I started to doubt His existence. I felt like, if there was a God, He surely didn't work in my life. The resentment I had for God made me a prime pick for Satan who had ample room to move into my life and get comfortable.

I began to rebel against anything and everything. I started smoking marijuana, drinking wine and shoplifting to stuff the pain that lived inside of me. My father couldn't control me so he and my older brother sent me to a religious boarding school. After high school, I joined the Marine Corps and fought in the Vietnam War. For someone who lived with as much pain as I was trying to stuff, my military tour only enhanced my drinking, smoking and pill-popping habit. So, when alcohol and drugs were working to help numb the pain within me, I found no need to call on God. After four years in the military, I received a scholarship to play football at California Lutheran College in Thousand Oaks, CA. The military had given me a tremendous amount of discipline, but I was still drinking and my drug use had progressed. Now, as a college student, I discovered another fixation and that addiction was women. I just had to have them.

I always thought I was a good looking guy, so after college, I got an agent and became a model. I did a lot of print work and television commercials. I was still using drugs and by then, I had started snorting cocaine. Satan completely had me in his grip. Since I was in Hollywood going to parties, having sex with a different woman every night, using cocaine to wake up, drinking alcohol to go to bed, Satan the great deceiver, had me believing that my "life" had arrived. To support my cocaine habit, I became a drug dealer. At that time, I didn't realize it but God truly blessed me as a cocaine dealer because just when I needed to, He allowed me to fail.

At this point, I was free-basing rock cocaine everyday, and was so paranoid that I couldn't leave my apartment to go to work. If someone knocked on my door, I was too afraid to answer it. I got progressively worse. I sold my possessions to buy more cocaine. Soon, all of my utilities got turned off, but I was still smoking rock cocaine in the dark, burning candles to see. Shortly after that, my girlfriend left and then I got evicted from my apartment and became homeless. I was sleeping in my car. Then I became a taxi driver for people who wanted to buy drugs. My fare was a piece of whatever they bought. When someone stole my car, I really became homeless and started sleeping in a burned-down store front. For food, I went to the LA Mission. At the Mission, they would handout peanut butter sandwiches and punch to anyone who attended their church service. I went just for the food. I never could get the God thing.

I became a junkie living on skid row. I went from a US Marine, college football star and working Black male model to begging for spare change on the street or begging a dope dealer to sell me a \$1.00 piece when I only had 65 cents. Just when I thought that nothing in my existence could get any worse, I got word that my father died in New Orleans. My entire world collapsed. I was so mad, hurt and mad some more. I felt lost, alone and sad. What a terrible time for me to collect some money that had been owed to me. I went to the liquor store to buy alcohol, the dope man to buy rock cocaine and to the hotel with two prostitutes. Six days later, I walked out of the hotel room. The next day, I collapsed on skid row and couldn't breathe. I labored to inhale even small sips of air. After twenty six days in ICU, I was discharged. My doctor told me that he wasn't sure what was wrong and that he thought I had bacterial or viral pneumonia. I was back on skid row feeling weak and dizzy. I was also mad because the Mission wouldn't give me a sick bed. I had to prove to the Mission that I was hospitalized and the hospital had no records on file of me ever being there so I started smoking rock cocaine again.

When I finally ran out of ideas on how to live, I found myself begging my nephew, 10 years my junior, for money and a place to sleep. When he said no I walked away crying. In an alley, I dropped to my knees and prayed a prayer that only a desperate child could pray. I prayed, "GOD, PLEASE HELP ME!" Then a strange sensation came over my body. I had never felt comfortable in my skin and somehow I knew that that feeling was over. All I had to do was stop fighting God, move out the way and let Him do His work. I got off of my knees and went to the nearest bus stop. I told the bus driver that I had no money and to please take me to the nearest drug rehabilitation center. The driver said, "sir, please take a seat." That night, I took three buses without a cent in my pocket.

When I arrived at the recovery center, they offered to put me in their fourteen day program. Everyone entering the program had to take several blood tests and if you didn't test positive for Tuberculosis, you were accepted. Two weeks had passed and before I was discharged, I was ordered to go to the nurse's office. She told me to sit down and take 3 deep breaths and said, "sir, we have the results of your blood test and it shows that you have the antibodies for the HIV virus." The next few moments seemed as though the world stood still. I was petrified. I could not breathe, think or speak. I just sat there, numb. I said to the nurse, "I knew God was

gonna punish me for the way I lived." Then I heard the most comforting statement that I never forgot. The nurse said, "God is not a punishing God and he surely doesn't want his children to suffer. You have an illness and no one deserves to be sick."

I never was an intravenous drug user and therefore had to have contracted AIDS through unprotected sex with a woman. After that, I went to live in a homeless shelter that was sensitive to people living with HIV and AIDS. I started a 12-step program for my drug and alcohol problem, a therapy group session for people living with HIV and AIDS, I saw a psychiatrist regularly and the most important thing, I started communicating with God everyday and joined a church. One day I got really sick and my temperature was 105 degrees. I went to the hospital and my temperature had climbed to 106.8 degrees. Everyone thought I was going to die. Suddenly I got enough strength to scream the name of JESUS and then prayed a four word prayer. I prayed, "GOD, PLEASE HELP ME!" Then at a rapid pace I started praying the Lord's Prayer over and over. Through the night, my fever broke. After twenty-eight days in ICU I was released. The diagnosis was that I had a near-death experience with PCP (Pneumocystis Carinii Pneumonia), an opportunistic infection common for individuals living with HIV/AIDS and one of the leading killers of all HIV/AIDS infections. I was told that because I had such high temperatures, my immune system had been destroyed, and if I took good care of myself, I would live for only two more years. I was told that on November 28, 1995.

By then, I had already welcomed God into my life and was not afraid. There is a comfort in God like no other. I now saw life through the light of the Holy Spirit. I walked differently (unafraid) and I talked differently (thanking God every waking moment of every day.) I only wanted to thank, praise and worship God. I made a conscious decision to turn my will and life over to the Lord. It's been my experience that sometimes God waits before answering our prayers only so He can strengthen us to do His will. In His mercy, God forgave me even when I couldn't forgive myself. I found that when I turned my life over to the God of mercy and understanding, I never felt lost again.

People always mention the bad things related to AIDS. I will be the first to admit that it is an awful sight to watch someone waste away because they have no immune system. But, I would also like to mention what has been good for me to be living with AIDS. You

see, I found out that people who are diagnosed with a terminal illness can make a tremendous amount of spiritual progress in a matter of minutes (fear is a great motivator). Being diagnosed with AIDS is such a heavy load to carry, well it was for me, so much that I had to call on something powerful to lift my pain and that was Jesus. Today, I have the closest relationship with my Lord and savior than I have ever had. I am a grateful child of God living with AIDS. If it took a terminal illness to bring me back to the God of my salvation, then I'll have to smile and say, "wow, what a small price to pay for eternal salvation."

The God of love, mercy and grace sent me to a church on Crenshaw Blvd. in Los Angeles. I am on fire with the Holy Spirit, thanks to the family that has adopted me. Yes, without a mother and father, life couldn't be better. West Angeles Church of God in Christ said to me a sinner, come in and sit down and we will love you until you are able to love yourself. Bishop Charles E. Blake accepted me with unquestionable compassion, a sinner, an addict for 35 years, a father who had seven children by six different women, an ungodly past and living with AIDS. Bishop Blake said to me, you may not always have joy, but you can always rejoice in the Lord and if you rejoice in the Lord long enough, it will bring you joy. With Bishop Blake's anointed expression and caring manner, every time I hear him preach I know that everything is gonna be all right. For in Jesus' name, I never have to feel alone again. PRAISE GOD.

P.S. West Angeles Church of God in Christ saved my life. I'd like my thanks to go out to the body of West Angeles, Bishop Charles E. Blake and last but not least, my brother in Christ, for his strength and inspiration, Erving "Magic" Johnson.

MY HOPE IS IN THE LORD!

By: JOSEPH R. VAVASSEUR

The first time I saw real fear
I saw it through the eyes of a
black haired, brown eyed,
5 foot 9 inch man
As I gazed into my mirror
Shortly after the results
of a simple HIV test.

Oh yeah! I felt real fear
I felt all alone and deeply frightened.
The voice still echo's in my ears.
"Sir," as experienced doctors say
"Our best guess is...you have two years to live!"

From that exact moment
putting a smile on my face
or going out to play
Came harder and harder
from Day by Day

Some days the battle is only me
against me and I'm losing.
My days go so fast
Because I feel I'll never last.
This illness is full
of so much depression and fright
I find it hard
just to sleep at night.

Fun comes hard
and good times not at all
Getting out of bed each morning
is like slow suicide.

It's the stuff!
Yes! the stuff I face that blocks my joy.
If it isn't about medication side effects,
Worrying about Viral Loads or CD4's,
that make me Sad
It's waking up in the morning
and plain just feeling Bad

The second time I saw real fear
It was in the eyes and on the face
Of every patient sitting in
my doctor's place.
One thing about being diagnosed
with HIV
besides the regret,
Is when you are told that you are positive
you never forget

- HIV -

It's in my BLOOD
It's in my SOUL
It's in my BEING
It's in the very core of my EXISTENCE

If I could remove or stop or just lighten
the Pain
the Suffering
the Fear that lives in people that I see
I would gladly lay down my life
to cure anyone with HIV.

Living around people with AIDS and HIV
has brought.
The true meaning to the words
that JESUS CHRIST taught.

Many HIV positive people's
eyes are as peaceful as a Dove's.
And when you get a hug
you can feel the love.

I have never experienced
a group so caring
so unselfish and so free
with their love and sharing.

Memorial service is full
of so much feeling.
That I receive strength for my journey
and leave with so much healing.

But the heroes here show love
in so many ways.
They bring joy to my heart
in my remaining days.

My instructions from God is to see,
that I come back and give back
what was so freely given to me

In Closing I'd like to say:
I am just a Nobody
trying to tell Anybody
about Somebody
that can help Everybody

My Testimony is:
No one is hopeless whose
Hope is in The Lord

PRAISE GOD!

AIDS

Acquired Immunodeficiency Syndrome, a viral disease that results in impairment of the body's immune system. People with AIDS can get a number of life-threatening diseases that do not affect individuals with healthy immune systems. They may also contract very severe cases of more common diseases. AIDS is generally diagnosed at the most advanced stage of HIV infection, and this diagnosis signals significant damage to the body's immune system.

Anonymous testing

See "HIV test."

Body fluids

Any fluid in the human body, such as blood, urine, saliva, sputum, tears, semen, breast milk, or vaginal secretions. Only blood, semen, breast milk, and vaginal secretions have been linked directly to the transmission of HIV.

Casual contact

Daily contact between people at home, school, work or in the community that does not involve sexual interactions or the sharing of needles. HIV is not transmitted through casual contact.

Combination therapies

Commonly known as "cocktails," two or more drugs or treatments used together to achieve optimum results against HIV infection and/or AIDS. Combination therapy may offer advantages over single-drug therapies by being more effective in decreasing viral load.

Confidential testing

See "HIV test."

Early intervention

In the context of HIV, medical intervention – including HIV testing – early in the course of the disease, often before symptoms develop.

Epidemic

A disease which spreads to many individuals in a population at the same time.

HIV

Human Immunodeficiency Virus, the virus that causes AIDS.

HIV disease; HIV infection

Anyone who has been infected with HIV is said to have HIV infection or HIV disease. These terms define a wide spectrum of medical circumstances ranging from healthy without symptoms of infection (often early in the course of disease) to severe and life-threatening symptoms (late in the course of infection). The course of HIV disease range from months to years – (everyone's immune system is different and HIV will attack everyone differently).

HIV test

A blood test that detects the presence of HIV antibodies in the blood. A reactive or positive HIV test indicates HIV infection. A non-reactive or negative test indicates that no antibodies to HIV were found, and that the person is either uninfected or has been infected recently and has not yet developed HIV antibodies. See also "window period."

Antibody testing is performed in anonymous or confidential settings. In anonymous testing, test-takers offer no identifying information, such as name, address or phone number. Instead, they are usually given a code number at the time their blood is drawn, or a tissue sample is taken, and offer that code number to receive their results. During confidential testing, test-takers provide identifying information linking their identity to a record of the test. Confidentiality of these records is protected by the laws that protect medical records, and in some states or regions, by additional laws specific to HIV-related information.

HIV-negative

Referring to one's HIV status. One who is HIV-negative does not have HIV.

HIV-positive

Referring to one's HIV status. One who is HIV-positive has the virus that can lead to AIDS.

Immune system

The system that protects the body from disease-causing organisms (pathogens) or toxins.

Infection

Condition in which virulent organisms are able to multiply within the body and cause a response from the host's immune defenses.

Injection drug user (IDU)

A person who injects drugs for recreational use into the veins, muscles or under the skin.

Intravenous drug user (IVDU)

A person who injects drugs for recreational use directly into the veins. Sometimes used interchangeably with “injection drug user,” though technically the term does not include persons who inject drugs into the muscles or under the skin.

Maternal transmission

Transmission of HIV from a pregnant woman or mother to her fetus or newborn. Infection could occur during the course of pregnancy, during childbirth or after birth through breast feeding. Sometimes called “vertical transmission,” “neonatal transmission” or “perinatal transmission.”

Modes of transmission

Ways in which HIV is passed from one person to another. There are four modes of HIV transmission: (1) unprotected sexual intercourse; (2) sharing of needles or paraphernalia for injection drug use or other purposes; (3) from a pregnant woman with HIV disease to her fetus or newborn; (4) through other exchanges of blood or tissue.

Opportunistic infections

Infections that arise in individuals whose immune systems are compromised or damaged. These infections take advantage of the weakened immune system, hence the name “opportunistic.”

Pandemic

An epidemic that has spread over a large region. The HIV epidemic has extended worldwide and reached pandemic proportions.

Prevention

To keep from happening; taking advanced measures or precautions against something possible or probable.

Risky behavior

Engaging in activities that increase one’s chances of contracting HIV. Such activities include unprotected sex (vaginal, anal or oral) and injection drug use with shared needles.

Safer sex

Sexual activities that carry little or no risk of transmitting HIV. These include behaviors in which body fluids capable of transmit-

ting HIV (blood, semen, vaginal secretions) are not exchanged between sexual partners.

Sexually transmitted disease (STD)

Any of a number of diseases that are commonly spread through sexual activity. HIV infection is a sexually transmitted disease.

Symptoms

Any noticeable, subjective change in the body or its functions that indicates disease or phases of disease, as reported by the patient.

Transmission

The passage of a disease-causing organism – bacteria, virus, fungus – from one person to another.

Unprotected sex

Sexual activities that are at higher risk of transmitting HIV because no precautions (such as using condoms) are taken to prevent the exchange of body fluids which can transmit the virus.

Virus

An organism made up of genes surrounded by a protein coating. Technically, a virus is not actually a living organism because it cannot reproduce itself. It must invade a living cell to reproduce. Viruses are smaller than any living organism.

Window period

The time period for the point of first infection with HIV to the development of measurable HIV antibodies. The window period usually runs two to 12 weeks and may last as long as six months, and in very rare cases even longer. During the window period, an HIV-infected person may test HIV antibody negative.

To help congregations retain the message after an HIV/AIDS prevention sermon, church-sensitive prevention materials can be distributed following every HIV/AIDS service.

Below is a list of promotional items that can be used:

1. Lapel Pins:

The Lapel Pin is the cross with a Kente cloth AIDS ribbon wrapped around it and is made of sturdy metal. It has been very popular among African American churchgoers.

2. *Healing Begins Here* Quiz Cards:

Each Quiz Card provides four (4) true or false statements regarding HIV/AIDS. Below each statement answers can be found when the silver foil is scratched off. Turn the card over for an explanation of each statement. The cards are updated annually with new statistics. They are an interactive, non-aggressive way to test one's knowledge about HIV/AIDS.

Lapel Pins and Quiz Cards may be ordered by calling BaumanCurry & Co. at (323) 525-0559 or via e-mail at guidebook@baumancurry.com

3. Online Materials:

Copies of the Guidebook, Supplements and Quiz Cards are available online as a PDF format by visiting www.baumancurry.com or www.arkofrefuge.org. Downloads are free of charge.

R E S O U R C E S **HIV/AIDS**
ORGANIZATIONS
RESOURCE LIST

This section provides a list of organizations that offer HIV/AIDS workshops, training, videos, education or prevention information. Some materials can be obtained by writing or calling the following organizations.

AIDS ALLIANCE FOR CHILDREN, YOUTH AND FAMILIES

1600 K. Street NW, Suite 201
Washington, DC 20006
Phone: (202) 785-3564
Toll-free (888) 917-AIDS(2437)
Fax: (202) 785-3579
Website: www.aids-alliance.org
Contact: Jeoff Pynn

ARK OF REFUGE, INC.

1025 Howard Street
San Francisco, CA 94103
Phone: (415)-861-1060
Fax: (415)-861-6103
Website: www.arkofrefuge.org
Contact: Reverend Yvette Flunder or Pastor Valerie Brown Troutt
The program components include pastoral and congregational needs assessment, model sermons and preaching practicum, interactive AIDS 101 workshops, facilitated panel discussions with persons living with AIDS, capacity building and technical assistance services, community service projects, 1-800 anonymous testing hotline and a network to other faith-based service providers.

BALM IN GILEAD

130 West 42nd Street, Suite 450
New York, New York 10036
Toll-free: (888)-225-6243
Website: www.balmingilead.org
E-mail: info@balmingilead.org
Contact: Reverend Alberta Ware
Offers videos, books and posters for African American churches addressing HIV/AIDS issues.

CALIFORNIA AIDS HOTLINE

(800) 367-AIDS (2437)
Provides HIV/AIDS information, referrals to services, HIV test

sites, emotional and practical support that includes how to practice safe sex, how to stay healthy if HIV positive and how to remain HIV negative.

NATIONAL ASSOCIATION FOR THE ADVANCEMENT OF COLORED PEOPLE (NAACP)

National Office
4805 Mt. Hope Drive
Baltimore, MD 21215
Phone: (410) 358-8900
Website: www.naACP.org
Contact: Caya Lewis
Provides free educational videos and discussion guides addressing HIV/AIDS in the African American Community.

NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF PEOPLE WITH AIDS

1413 K Street NW, 7th Floor
Washington, DC 20005
Phone: (202) 898-0414
Website: www.napwa.org
Contact: Rene Cajina
Provide free pamphlets and brochures on HIV/AIDS treatment issues

NATIONAL BLACK LEADERSHIP COMMISSION ON AIDS

105 East 22nd Street, Suite 711
New York, New York 10010
Phone: (212) 614-0023
Fax: (212) 614-0057
E-mail: NBLCA@aol.com
Website: www.blca.org
Contact: Tony Spencer
Offers a list of HIV/AIDS referrals

NATIONAL CDC HIV & AIDS HOTLINE

Phone (800) 342-2437
Offers 24 hour HIV/AIDS information and referrals

NATIONAL MINORITY AIDS COUNCIL

1931 13th Street NW
Washington, DC 20009
Phone: (202) 483-6622
Fax: (202) 483-1135
Website: www.nmac.org
Contact: Peter Velasco

NATIONAL MINORITY AIDS COUNCIL (continued)

Provides three national conferences every year on education, prevention and treatment; HIV/AIDS prison outreach materials; public policy and advocacy work needs; technical assistance on applying for grants to implement HIV/AIDS programs.

NATIONAL PEDIATRIC & FAMILY HIV RESOURCE CENTER

University of Medicine & Dentistry of New Jersey
 30 Bergen Street – ADMC #4
 Newark, NJ 07103
 Phone: (973) 972-0410
 Toll-free (800) 362-0071
 Fax: (973) 972-0399
 Website: www.pedhiv aids.org
 Contact: Carolyn Burr

World Wide Web

HIV/AIDS Treatment Information Service

www.hivatis.org

Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS

www.unaids.org

The Pedi-AIDS Electronic News Network

www.hypernet.com

Project Inform (treatment information)

www.projinf.org

California Department of Health Services, Office of AIDS

www.dhs.ca.gov/aids

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC)

www.cdc.gov

American Foundation For AIDS Research (AMFAR)

www.amfar.com

National Support Site for HIV Positive Heterosexuals

www.heteroc.com

The NAMES Project

www.aidsquilt.com

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

On behalf of the California Department of Health Services, Office of AIDS and BaumanCurry & Co., we thank all those who took time out of their busy schedules to read and critique the *Pastor's Guidebook* and direct us in developing materials that are church-sensitive. The idea and creation of the *Pastor's Guidebook* was truly a collaborative effort. We benefited from the expertise of the following:

Cynthia Davis, MPH, Assistant Professor,
Charles R. Drew University of Medicine and Science

Reverend Dr. James A. Forbes, Jr.,
The Riverside Church, New York City

Pastor Rueben W. Ford,
Saint Paul African American Episcopal Church,
Santa Barbara, California

Pastor Duane Ganther,
Harvest Christian Center, Los Angeles, California

Phelicia R. Jones, Project Coordinator,
The NIA Mentoring Project

Wilbert Jordan, M.D., HIV/AIDS Specialist,
Martin Luther King Jr. Medical Center

Ella Kelly, Ph.D., Senior Research Associate,
University of California, Los Angeles

Duane T. Poe, Executive Director,
San Francisco Black Coalition on AIDS

Sylvia Rhue, Ph.D. Western Regional Coordinator
Black Church Initiative
Religious Coalition for Reproductive Choice

Chris Sandoval, Director,
Polaris Research & Development, Inc.

Staci Syas, Health Educator,
County of Sacramento, Department of Health and Human Services

We are grateful to have had the opportunity to receive inspiring testimonials from Joseph R. Vavasseur, Ava Gardner-Shipp, Reverend Elder Claude E. Bowen and Arlene. In addition, we would like to thank the Statewide HIV/AIDS Church Outreach Advisory Board and LOOK UP & LIVE! Steering Committee members for their guidance in assisting us develop the *Pastor's Guidebook*.

It is our hope that all members of clergy read and use *Healing Begins Here: A Pastor's Guidebook for HIV/AIDS Ministry through the Church.* Far too many of our loved ones have died and will die from AIDS and now is the time to stop the spread of HIV and AIDS in our communities.