

Grace and peace to you.

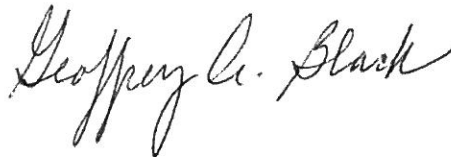
For nearly 30 years, HIV and AIDS has been a growing pandemic in our country and around the world. Whether we are conscious of it or not, every one of us is affected by this disease. When we look more closely, we see HIV and AIDS not only continues to have a devastating impact on scores of people and communities, but also that some are bearing the brunt of this disease much more severely than others, particularly the poor, people of color, and young people.

I believe as people of faith we have an important, vital role to play in stopping the spread of HIV and providing care and support to all who are affected. The National Week of Prayer for the Healing of AIDS is a wonderful opportunity for faith communities to give renewed focus to our response. The United Church of Christ joins this call to prayer, education, advocacy and service for the healing of AIDS in the United States and the World. I encourage those within and beyond the United Church of Christ to engage in at least one, if not several, new actions to more effectively address HIV in the communities we serve.

I do not underestimate the ways in which we are challenged in our efforts to respond to this disease. HIV is not only daunting from a medical perspective, but HIV related stigma persists in our communities, creating barriers to effective prevention, treatment and care. Too frequently this stigma has come from and has been perpetuated by religion. We must work in ways that transform this reality. We can do so by learning more about HIV, increasing our skills, behaving in ways that prevent infection and reaching out in compassion to all those who are living with and affected by HIV.

The quest for ending this pandemic rests with each of us doing our part. We are called to this work by our creator, to be servants in the service of others. Trusting in God's presence and the power of God's spirit, let us make the most of The National Week of Prayer for the Healing of AIDS and realize our full capacity to live the promise to stop AIDS.

Yours, in hope and service,



Reverend Geoffrey Black
General Minister and President



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God is still speaking,

