

2011 National Week of Prayer for the Healing of AIDS
Statement by Bishop Mark Hanson
Evangelical Lutheran Church in America

The Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA) anticipates participating with *hope* and *joy* in the Week of Prayer for the Healing of AIDS in 2011:

- *Hope* in the power of prayer and the movement of the Holy Spirit among and through us to bring about the healing for which we pray.
- *Hope* in raising the reality of the pandemic of HIV and AIDS in the United States and the ability of the community of faith to address it.
- *Joy* in the opportunity to join with brothers and sisters in Christ as we lift our voices in prayer to God for healing.
- *Joy* in the promise of renewal that represented by the National Week of Prayer for the Healing of AIDS.
- *With hope and joy in recognition of the creative imagination, commitment, and strength of people living with and affected by HIV and AIDS in all parts of the world.*

The ELCA affirms the claim made by the Lutheran World Federation and the World Council of Churches that the body of Christ has AIDS. Those living with HIV and AIDS include members of the ELCA and brothers and sisters in Christ around the world. When one member of the body of Christ suffers, we all suffer.

The ELCA acknowledges that the reality of AIDS in the twenty-first century demands strong action. Indifference or a shallow response is not an option if the church is to be faithful to its calling. The ELCA's response is rooted in hope and joyful confidence that this church will be transformed and energized for this task not only through its ongoing encounter with the living Christ in Word and Sacrament, but also with those affected by HIV and AIDS, for in their faces this church recognizes the face of Christ.

The ELCA believes a world is possible where new cases of HIV are prevented and all individuals living with HIV or AIDS are able to live with dignity. The ELCA seeks:

- To halt the spread of HIV through effective prevention, treatment, and care.
- To eliminate the stigma and discrimination experienced by those who are HIV-positive.
- To reduce the conditions of poverty and marginalization that contribute to the spread of HIV.

The ELCA recognizes that the realization of this vision will require long-term, focused, and intentional engagement by churches, other faith groups, non-governmental organizations and institutions, governments, international organizations, the private sector, and individuals of good will. With over 4.7 million members and more than 10,400 congregations in the United States, in addition to the relationships with 68.3 million Lutherans worldwide, the ELCA is well-positioned to respond faithfully to those infected and affected by HIV and AIDS.

We look forward with hope and joy to the 2011 National Week of Prayer for the Healing of AIDS. May the power of this partnership in prayer support, comfort, and strengthen those with HIV and AIDS and those who love, serve, and stand beside them.

The Rev. Mark S. Hanson
Presiding Bishop
Evangelical Lutheran Church in America