

We, as leaders in the faith community, have not only a moral responsibility but a unique opportunity to reach people of all ethnic, socio-economical/political, and gender backgrounds in terms of heightening awareness and educating in all areas of their lives. We are asked by members what differentiates our denominational doctrine from another, who they should marry, where they should live, what God has purposed for their lives, where their children should go to school, and the list goes on and on. The African-American faith community is the center of community life. We are entrusted with the lives of many. So, we pray for God's guidance and wisdom in our answers. Prayer, after all, IS what we do.

I was appalled to learn that although African-Americans represent only 12 percent of the US population, we account for 46% of the people living with HIV/AIDS, and the number for the proportion of cases at all stages of HIV/AIDS (from infection to death) continues to grow (CDC, '09). **Why** are we so disproportionately affected by HIV and AIDS? I believe African-Americans have ignored the plight of the person affected with HIV far too long. And, our faith community has "hushed" any conversation on the subject far longer. The twenty-first century calls the faith community to be accountable to the plight of our brothers and sisters, men, women, and children. Awareness, education, communication, and prayer are our defense tools in the war against HIV/AIDS.

The Balm in Gilead has called the faith community to task; called us to put our faith into action. We are called to educate about HIV, to break the silence, to increase awareness, to share community resources, to encourage testing, and to respond compassionately and supportively to people living with HIV/AIDS. They have developed and made available numerous resources to aid us in preparing for a week of prayer for the healing of AIDS. We have no more excuses. Can you imagine God's response to thousands of people storming his throne with prayer? I'm excited about the possibilities! Join me in the week of prayer for the healing of AIDS. Share the information on this Website with your faith community, with your schools, with your family, friends and colleagues. We can begin here; we can begin now; it can begin with you. After all, prayer IS what we do.

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