



“Archbishop Desmond Tutu says, ‘if it’s not political, it’s not Christianity.’ The Balm In Gilead has mobilized the Black Church Week of Prayer for the Healing of AIDS for nearly two decades. Those joining the movement begin with prayer, then – as founder Pernessa Seele explains – somewhere along the way the Spirit stirs and often compels a faith community to go still deeper into action.

“As the Balm in Gilead seeks to broaden the week of prayer, it is my honor to join the movement as Rector of St. Paul’s Episcopal Church in Capitol Square (Richmond, Virginia). I encourage my brothers and sisters in Richmond and beyond to also sign on for this year’s week of prayer if they haven’t already. The deadly virus that causes HIV is color blind. It doesn’t care if we’re in a so-called red state or blue state or purple state. It doesn’t worry if we’ve been kind and generous or cruel and greedy. It knows no mercy.

“People of faith (and those who have not yet found faith) must offer a united front against HIV/AIDS, help those living with it, and together combat the systemic injustices that stand in the way of access to preventative education and care. The Balm In Gilead exemplifies God’s mercy, justice, and hope. May many more answer Pernessa’s call – and, yes, God’s call – to see the suffering and end it.”

-- The Rev. Wallace Adams-Riley, Rector, St. Paul’s Episcopal Church