

World AIDS Day Message

from Presiding Bishop Mark S. Hanson

World AIDS Day is December 1, 2010. It is a day of prayer and remembrance for all who are affected by this global pandemic, whether they are HIV-positive or living with AIDS.

World AIDS Day gives us the opportunity to reflect, both individually and as faith-community, on God's call to us. I believe that we are called to lift up the dignity and value of each person. We are called to witness God's encompassing and transforming love. We are called to lead by example by standing together against stigma and discrimination, striving for comprehensive access to treatment and care and working tirelessly on methods of prevention that will help restore health and wholeness to all of God's people.

World AIDS Day gives us the opportunity to reflect on our shared work, often with other faith-based groups and global partners, to respond to the devastating pandemic of HIV and AIDS in our world, as well as in this country.

World AIDS Day gives us the opportunity to strengthen our shared commitment to this work. In March 2010, I joined many interfaith leaders at a Religious Leaders' Summit in the Netherlands. We committed ourselves to "... hold each other accountable in this partnership, eradicating stigma and discrimination and jointly enabling the universal access to prevention, treatment, care and support which will lead us to a new world, a world of respect, justice, love and dignity for all of our world's people."

World AIDS Day gives us an opportunity to make a personal commitment to this work. My personal commitment includes commitments related to the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA). I am committed to:

- Doing all I can to break the barriers of silence and exclusion to fully and openly include people living with HIV and AIDS and their families in our religious communities;
- Leading by example and encouraging my religious community to deepen its engagement in the response to HIV and AIDS, including advocating for prevention, treatment, care and support for all.

World AIDS Day gives each of us an opportunity to make our own commitment. In doing so, we anticipate the future. As the ELCA strategy on HIV and AIDS says, "When it acknowledges the brokenness of Christ's body and its own vulnerability, this church will open itself to experience God's healing in new ways and will gain renewed strength and freedom to engage the world with vigor."

On this World AIDS Day 2010, I invite you to prayer, to remembrance and to leading by example. Join me in signing on the Religious Leaders Commitment to Action at www.HIVcommitment.net. Join me, at the foot of the cross, in praying for healing and strength for those with HIV and AIDS, and for courage and commitment for all in the ongoing fight against this pandemic.

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