

# Talking about AIDS



The stigma that still surrounds AIDS and the gut-wrenching discomfort that many of us feel when introduced to the subject make it difficult to have conversations about AIDS awareness. Just talking about sexual health remains taboo for some, while HIV is still perceived by many as a gay person's disease even though the infection rate is increasing among Black and other ethno-racial heterosexual women. The reality is we cannot talk about HIV without talking about sex, stigma, and discrimination.

December 1 is recognized as World AIDS Day. All around the world people come together to raise awareness about HIV/AIDS, demonstrate international solidarity in the face of the pandemic, and encourage progress in HIV/AIDS prevention, treatment, and care. For some, this day is mixed with emotions surrounding the loss of those who have died from AIDS-related complications. For others, it is a chance to engage in challenging conversations about AIDS and AIDS prevention.

None of us are immune to the effects of AIDS. How will you recognize World AIDS day this year?

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Black CAP is a social service agency that has worked collaboratively with The United Church of Canada to facilitate courageous conversations about AIDS.

## Prayer

God, open our eyes to the systems around us that oppress, hold down, and disadvantage the most vulnerable in our society,  
**so that we may increase and abound in our love for one another and for all people.**

God, open our ears to the myths, stereotypes, and lies that keep these systems going,  
**so that we may increase and abound in our love for one another and for all people.**

God, open our mouths to challenging conversations about race, sex, and differences,  
**so that we may increase and abound in our love for one another and for all people.**

God, open our hearts to the understanding that we are all affected by HIV/AIDS,  
**so that we may increase and abound in our love for one another and for all people.**

## Reflection Questions

- Name some HIV/AIDS-related myths that you are aware of or may hold yourself. How do these perceptions aid or hinder the spread of the virus?
- Who in your society do you believe to be most at-risk? Why? Who is not vulnerable?
- Describe sexual health. What are signs of unhealthy sexual relationships? How can healthy sexuality be a key component of our spiritual journey?

## Hymn

"Comfort, Comfort Now My People" (*Voices United* 883)

## For More Information

- Connect with an AIDS service organization in your community.
- Visit the Black Coalition for AIDS Prevention Facebook page.
- Visit the International Aids Conference website: [www.aids2012.org](http://www.aids2012.org).
- Visit the Ecumenical Advocacy Alliance website: [www.e-alliance.ch/en/s/hivaids/world-aids-day](http://www.e-alliance.ch/en/s/hivaids/world-aids-day).

