In June 2001, 189 Heads of State and government representatives signed the United Nations Declaration of Commitment on HIV/AIDS – a long list of firm commitments to respond to AIDS that leaders pledged to fulfill. Since then, additional commitments have been made to strengthen the response. Some promises have been kept, but many have not, and the pace of the AIDS epidemic continues to outstrip most efforts to deal with it.

“Keep the Promise” is the theme of the Ecumenical Advocacy Alliance’s HIV and AIDS campaign (2005-2008), in keeping with a broader civil society campaign, “Stop AIDS. Keep the Promise” (2005-2010) coordinated by the World AIDS Campaign. The campaign aims to ensure that governments and organizations keep the promises they have made to effectively respond to AIDS.

The Alliance’s campaign also highlights the promises made by faith communities and religious leaders to care for and support people living with or affected by HIV and AIDS. EAA also advocates for further efforts and resources to fight the pandemic.

This campaign is launched on World AIDS Day, 1 December 2005, as we ask each other as well as world leaders to “Keep the Promise.”
A commitment of faith

Many churches and other faith communities have issued statements and made commitments regarding the care and support of people living with and affected by HIV and AIDS. People of faith have been active in providing health care, counseling and spiritual guidance.

But like the response of governments and intergovernmental organizations, that of churches and faith-based organizations is not enough. The pandemic continues to grow, and at the root of many of the problems to provide effective treatment and prevention is ignorance of the facts about AIDS; stigma and discrimination which ostracize people from family, communities and the work place; and poverty, which makes communities and individuals more vulnerable and prevents access to treatment.

All churches and faith communities are either living with or affected by HIV and AIDS. In response to God’s gracious and inclusive love for all of humanity, lived out by Jesus’ own response to the most vulnerable in his community, churches are called to model acceptance for all and ensure that all receive support and care.

Have we, as people of faith, openly discussed our attitudes and actions in response to HIV and AIDS?

Have we, as members of faith communities, publicly committed ourselves to prevent and respond to HIV and AIDS?

Have we, as religious leaders, lived up to the statements we have made?

Have all of us, as people of faith, sufficiently transformed our attitudes and responses to the HIV pandemic so that communities become places of hope, healing and inclusion?

Silence is not an option. Nor is inaction. Injustice and suffering demand our advocacy in a world that desperately needs people of faith creatively working together for change.

A commitment to act

- Make a personal promise to fight HIV and AIDS. You can record your promise through the World AIDS Campaign site at: http://www.worldaidscampaign.net/community/

- Hold a special worship service for World AIDS Day to reflect on promises made and the need for increased action in the fight against HIV and AIDS. Information and worship resources for World AIDS Day can be found at http://www.e-alliance.ch/wad.jsp. Find out what your church or religious community has said in response to the pandemic.

The pandemic continues to grow

Since the first clinical evidence of AIDS was reported over two decades ago, HIV and AIDS have spread to every corner of the world.

Currently, over 39 million people are living with HIV. In 2004, about 4.9 million people around the world became infected, 640,000 of them children. Since 1981 through 2004, AIDS has killed over 23 million people. In 2004, AIDS claimed 3.1 million lives.

Fifteen million children have been orphaned by AIDS. Globally, about one-third of adults living with HIV are young people. By December 2004 women accounted for 47% of all people living with HIV worldwide, and for 57% in sub-Saharan Africa.

For the most current update on the AIDS epidemic, see: http://www.unaids.org/wad2004/report.html
If your faith community has not made a commitment, discuss the Religious Leaders’ Statement of Commitment made at the 2004 International AIDS Conference http://media.e-alliance.ch/iac2004/docs/stmt_rel_leaders_new.doc. Consider adopting this statement in your own organization.

Find out how your church or faith community is currently responding to the crisis and discuss with others what more could and should be done.

Monitor the commitments of your national government to fund and respond to the HIV and AIDS crisis and let them know you expect them to do more. (For more information on the UN Declaration of Commitment on HIV/AIDS see http://www.ungasshiv.org)

Key dates 2005-2006
1 December 2005: World AIDS Day with the theme “Keep the Promise” (http://www.e-alliance.ch/wad.jsp)
4-9 December 2005: 14th International Conference on HIV/AIDS and Sexually Transmitted Infections in Africa, Abuja, Nigeria
14-23 February 2006: Ninth Assembly of the World Council of Churches, Porto Alegre, Brazil
7 April 2006: World Health Day
1 December 2006: World AIDS Day

For theological and Biblical resources on “Keep the Promise”, see http://www.e-alliance.ch
For more information:


World AIDS Campaign: http://www.worldaidscampaign.org

World AIDS Campaign - how to get involved: http://worldaidscampaign.info/index.php/wac/wac/get_involved

Resources for study, action, and worship: http://www.e-alliance.ch/hiv-resources.jsp

The Ecumenical Advocacy Alliance is a broad international network of churches and Christian organizations cooperating in advocacy on global trade and HIV and AIDS. The Alliance is based in Geneva, Switzerland. For more information, see http://www.e-alliance.ch/