HIV PREVENTION
A Global Theological Conversation
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Edited by
Gillian Paterson

Ecumenical Advocacy Alliance, Geneva
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This book, and the theological consultation that led to it, have been a remarkable collaborative endeavour involving many people. At the Ecumenical Advocacy Alliance we extend our deep and abiding thanks to all who have helped so much to make this possible, and who share our commitment to take forward meaningful theological conversation on HIV prevention.

First, we wish to thank the consultation participants who gave of their time and energy generously. For many, this required more than a week of absence from their work, their communities and their families in addition to preparation at home before they travelled to Johannesburg. Each participant contributed to the atmosphere of open discussion in an ecumenical spirit and without false compromises.

The invited speakers prepared and delivered thought-provoking papers and reviewed them with the editor for publication to form Part Two of this book.

A steering committee started to oversee the preparation for the consultation, its execution, and follow-up activities beginning in September 2007. We are most grateful to the vision and support of the committee members: Rachel Carnegie, Tearfund (UK); Maria Cimperman, Oblate School of Theology (USA); Cornelis du Toit, CABSA (South Africa); Robin Gill, University of Kent (UK); Christo Greyling, World Vision (South Africa); Wati Longchar, Eastern Theological College (India); Christoph E. Mann, Ecumenical Advocacy Alliance consultant (Germany); Esther Mombo, St. Paul’s University (Kenya); Gracia Violeta Ross Quiroga, REDBOL (Bolivia); Birgitta Rubensohn, Karolinska Institutet (Sweden); and Sally Smith, UNAIDS (Switzerland).

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Robin Gill, assisted by Jenny Gill, documented and distilled four days of plenary input and often vast and unfinished group work discussions literally overnight into early drafts of a consultation report for participants’ consideration.

As the editor of this book, Gillian Paterson has done a superb job in transforming the notes from the consultation into a workable text. Besides working with the authors of papers which were presented, she listened with eagerness to the feedback from all and took loving and professional care to make Part One of the book ‘inviting’ rather than ‘telling’. She was assisted by an editorial group of participants: Maria Cimperman, J. P. Heath, Esther Mombo, and Sally Smith.

Finally, our sincere thanks go to the financial contributors to this initiative, without whom the conversation could not even have begun, let alone have produced this book and stimulated the future opportunities for theological reflection on HIV prevention:
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ICCO
Missio Aachen
Tearfund
UNAIDS
UNFPA

The Garden Lodge and Conference Centre at Muldersdrift, outside of Johannesburg, was not only a suitable place for the consultation in many aspects, but one we also wish to recognize as a donor. Their generosity and commitment to the issues with which we were working contributed significantly to this fruitful theological conversation.

Finally, we thank the readers of this publication for entering into this theological conversation with us. We hope that our dialogue and subsequent actions will indeed make a profound and positive impact on all those affected by the HIV pandemic.

*Linda Hartke*
*Coordinator, Ecumenical Advocacy Alliance*
Foreword

About This Book

This book is the work of thirty-five leading theologians and practitioners, from five continents and many church traditions, some of them living with HIV, who met near Johannesburg in January 2008 under the auspices of the Ecumenical Advocacy Alliance (EAA). The conversation that took place there was a new stage in an ongoing dialogue among Christian theologians and practitioners that began in December 2003. Then UNAIDS (the Joint United Nations Program on HIV and AIDS) organized an international workshop at Windhoek, Namibia, whose aim was to sharpen theological responses to HIV and AIDS, especially in relation to stigma. The dialogue has continued in various forums and contexts, including the International AIDS Conferences in Bangkok (2004), Toronto (2006) and Mexico City (2008).

Focusing specifically on HIV prevention, the present conversation takes us a further step in this process. Outcomes, it is hoped, will include:

(i) this book, which is designed to summarize the theological reflections and views that were articulated during the consultation and outline some common principles and values;
(ii) the promotion of additional reflection in the future;
(iii) a strategy for future networking and collaboration that will strengthen Christian theological reflection on HIV prevention and connect to other communities of faith and secular groups working on prevention; and
(iv) steps to start a dialogue with other religions.

Part One of this book opens with an invitation to enter the conversation: an invitation addressed to the churches, to UN agencies, to networks of people living with HIV and to other partners. Chapter 1 explores what it means to ‘do theology’ in relation to HIV prevention, and suggests some underlying themes that might support this exercise.

In an effort to make the book usable by organizations and individuals who are actually asking the theological questions, the decision was taken to divide the remainder of the material that came out of the discussions into three parts. Accordingly, Chapters 2 to 4 focus respectively on HIV prevention at global and national levels (Chapter 2); at community and interpersonal levels (Chapter 3); and at the level of the individual (Chapter 4).

The division of theological perspectives into the global, the communal and the personal should not be treated too literally. Any such categorization is bound to be arbitrary. For example, the fact that justice appears under ‘global and national’ should not blind us to the fact that concepts of justice are crucial to the agenda of communities and interpersonal relationships. We want also to stress that our theological thinking, in the broad context of our efforts to bring about God’s reign, must be a call to integrate the global, communal and local, not to separate them.

Part Two of the book consists of seven chapters in which individual theologians and practitioners reflect on particular theological issues that emerge, for them, from the issue of HIV prevention. These challenging and original chapters started life as individual presentations at the Johannesburg consultation. Each writer approaches the topic of HIV prevention through the lens of his or her own context, his or her own denominational home within the Christian family, and through the lens, too, of a particular theological sub-discipline, underlining the richness and theological diversity that exists within the prevention agenda.
In the Epilogue to this book, you will find some of the proposals for action that emerged from these conversations (‘From Conversation to Action’), followed by a list of resources, source materials and publications which readers may find useful in following up some of the issues raised in these pages.

Gillian Paterson, Editor