

## **Aids Policy Statement and Recommendations to its Churches Presbytery of Carlisle**

Human Immunodeficiency Virus (HIV) infection -- in its later stages, referred to as AIDS -- in most cases is fatal. Once confined primarily to homosexuals and drug abusers, it is now gaining ground beyond those groups. Local churches will soon encounter the problem face to face --if they haven't already.

How should a church minister to those with AIDS? To what extent can it let them participate in fellowship without endangering others? Do other parishioners have a right to know who in the congregation has AIDS? What approach best blends caution and compassion?

The church is in need of policies to address these questions, policies which are based on facts and hold true regardless of personalities, politics, or social status. We affirm that such a policy can be created only in a neutral environment which means developing policy before being confronted by a specific situation.

"The church's Lord preaches good news to the poor, proclaims release to captives and recovery of sight to the blind, sets free the oppressed, announces the coming of God's jubilee (Lk. 4:16-19, cf. Isa. 61:1 ff), and calls the church to this same mission of compassion and justice. The church's ministry is to be marked by the same radical inclusiveness as Jesus' ministry: welcoming outcasts, healing the sick, casting out demons, overcoming fear, raising the dead (cf. Matt. 10: I). As Jesus risked his own ritual purity and religious credibility by reaching out to lepers and those tormented by evil spirits, so the church that prays in Jesus' name must seek health and wholeness for those oppressed by [any illness including] HIV infection." [From "To Meet AIDS with Grace and Truth," a resolution adopted by the 198th General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.)]

### **Education**

Proper education can dispel fear, instill hope, and enhance ministry; therefore, we are committed to educating ourselves and our community regarding HIV infection.

### **Employment**

Assuming all federal, state and local regulations will be adhered to, where applicable, we further affirm that there will be no policy of discrimination on the basis of HIV infection.

### **Testing**

Because AIDS is transmitted sexually and because AIDS is passed on from mother to newborn infant, the pastors and counseling staff are advised to counsel individuals (in premarital counseling) coming from high-risk backgrounds concerning testing for HIV infection.

It is further recommended that pastors and counseling staff explore issues of HIV Infection with all people at high risk. (This includes: males having intercourse with other males, IV drug abusers, prostitutes, hemophiliac people, who have had blood transfusions between 1977 and 1985, and people, who have had sexual intercourse with people in these high risk groups or with people of unknown risk.)

### **Communion**

There is no evidence of transmission of the HIV infection through the use of common cups, individual cups, or through contact with any of the elements. Therefore, no special precautions need to be taken in the administration of the sacrament.

### **Nursery**

Children with symptoms of illness are to remain with their adult guardians; however, children, who are HIV infected but remain asymptomatic will be allowed to participate in a nursery.

Nursery employees/workers should take proper precautions when handling blood/body fluids (disposable plastic gloves).

Older children testing positive, but showing no symptoms, are encouraged to participate fully in church activities.

### **Kitchen**

All individuals, who work directly with food preparation and serving, must remove themselves from such tasks when there is physical evidence of illness or there are exposed lesions.

Individuals, who test positive for the HIV infection but do not evidence any symptoms of illness will be allowed to assist with food preparation and service.

### **Confidentiality**

As in all personal matters, confidentiality will be maintained by all professional and lay members of the congregation.

*Because of the unique nature of this disease, we reaffirm our belief in celibacy outside marriage, and mutually faithful monogamous relationships, and the honoring of the human body as the temple of the Holy Spirit.*

9/26/1989