

# Center for the Church and Global AIDS Action Newsletter

For more information:  
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## TAX-DEDUCTIBLE GIFTS

As a government recognized 501(c)(3), gifts to the Center are tax-deductible. All Center contributors will receive receipts.

Send donations to:  
Center for the Church and Global AIDS  
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## EYE CLINIC OPENED IN INDIA FOR PERSONS LIVING WITH HIV AND AIDS

The virus causing AIDS often reduces the vision of persons. "Eye problems are common," says N. M. Samuel, M.D., who heads the new eye clinic in South India. "This increases stigma and discrimination, limits jobs and schooling."

When Jesus asked a blind man, "can you see?," he responded like HIV patients today: "people look like trees walking." Thanks to new equipment made possible by Denver's Bethany Lutheran Church and the Center, new miracles are happening. Julie White of the Center staff recently helped dedicate the clinic.



### 2,000 Miles For \$20,000?

*Remembering the suffering children and women with AIDS in India, Jay Patterson is determined to ride across America. Will she raise \$20,000?*

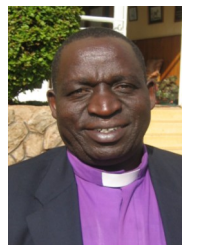


## GOVERNOR & BISHOP INVITED AS SPRING BRUNCH SPEAKERS

The annual "Spring is a Time for HOPE" brunch raises funds for "*Helping Orphans by Providing Essentials*" in Kenya. Persons giving \$150 to support an orphan are provided 2 free tickets, thanks to a generous donor.



Headline speakers invited are Governor John Hickenlooper and Kenya's Bishop William Muriuki. Word is still pending whether the Governor will attend.



Set for 11:00 a.m., Saturday, April 9, at the University of Denver, register now by contacting [jtwhite92@msn.com](mailto:jtwhite92@msn.com)

## "TEE OFF AGAINST AIDS IN 2011"

Three "best ball" golfing events are slated in 2011. Projects to be funded include AIDS programs both in the USA and internationally.

When golfers in **Grand Junction tee off on May 13** at the magnificent Redlands Mesa course, they are raising funds for western Colorado and Africa. The 5th Annual event in **Denver at City Park on August 16** will benefit programs in Asia, as well as help African-American and Latino AIDS agencies in Denver. In February golfers in Phoenix raised \$6,500 for India and Kenya, plus an AIDS retreat for persons in Arizona.

**Join the fun—sponsors, golfers and silent auction items needed!**

Contact: [jtwhite92@msn.com](mailto:jtwhite92@msn.com) or [globalaids@gmail.com](mailto:globalaids@gmail.com)

# “WORSE THAN HAVING AIDS IS THE WAY PEOPLE TREAT US”

Donald E. Messer, Executive Director

My engagement with HIV issues began when I was invited in the early 80’s to speak at a conference about the “church and AIDS.” In preparation, I interviewed six young gay men in a Denver hospital. Each told me his story. They encouraged me to never give up hope—and to never stop speaking out. What upset me then—and continues to anger me—is that they told me that “worse than having AIDS is the way people treat us.” When people get infected with cancer or have heart problems or diabetes, people are caring and compassionate, but around the world people with HIV and AIDS—and their families—often suffer dire stigma and discrimination.

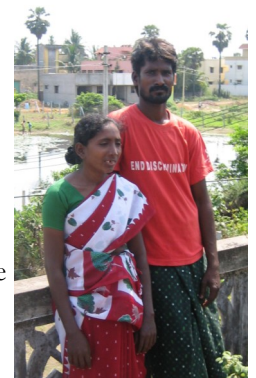
The consequence of HIV stigma for those living with HIV has been repeatedly documented. These often include physical and social isolation, verbal and physical violence, lack of access to medical care, and loss of livelihood. Afraid of how people will treat them, people avoid getting tested and seeking treatment—literally stigma spreads the disease. Stigma kills!



(Above, Dr. Kent Messer responds to a question about stigma research in India.)

My son, Dr. Kent D. Messer, a behavioral economist at the University of Delaware, has been engaged with other scholars in research to quantify the degree of HIV-related stigma shown by individuals in the USA, Kenya, and India. Besides measuring stigma, they seek to measure the effectiveness of various interventions to reduce this response. Preliminary results regarding the depth of this stigma has not been encouraging.

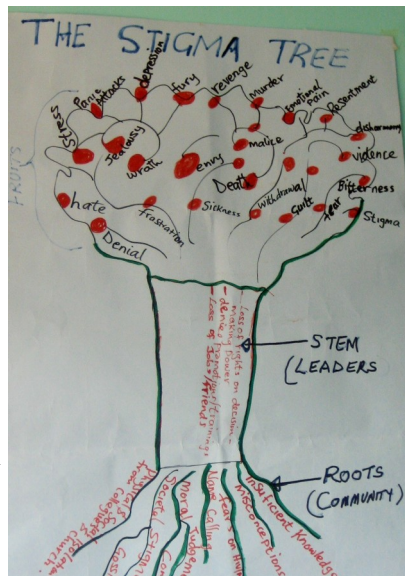
In pilot research, it has been learned that in the USA the average asking price for eating a chocolate brownie made by an HIV negative person was \$6, while the average asking request for eating a brownie made by an HIV positive person was \$42,634. People clearly still have great fears, ignorance, and prejudice. You can’t get HIV by eating food prepared by a person living with HIV. But thirty years into the pandemic—even people in the USA don’t know this.



In India and Kenya similar results were discovered when asking people to eat a bag of peanuts (one packaged by a person infected and another by a person not infected) as well as washing with soap, earlier used by an HIV positive person.

Promotion of anti-stigma programs are central to the mission of the Center for the Church and Global AIDS. Wherever we work in the world, we seek to spread the light of education, the values of inclusiveness and acceptance, and the imperatives of HIV prevention, testing, counseling, and treatment. We work in partnership with persons living with HIV, as we value their experience and expertise.

In the year ahead, we particularly want to increase our efforts at measuring and mitigating stigma and discrimination, and will be looking for gifts and grants to enhance our understanding of both the roots of stigma and how it can successfully be overcome. If you can help us find these resources, it would be most appreciated. Together we can make a difference.



(Educator Florence Murugu of Kenya graphically illustrates the “stigma tree.”)

*A Sri Lankan woman, Princey, told me how people burned her house and drove her family out of the village, once they knew she and her husband were infected. My Indian friend, Ashok, described how he was humiliated in the Navy, when they announced his diagnosis over a loud speaker system and nobody would eat at his table. A couple in Burma said they lost their little tea shop, because nobody would buy food from them anymore. William in Kenya told me he wanted to die because his family deserted him. A young seminarian, rejected by the theology faculty, committed suicide in India. When I preach in churches in the USA people come up and whisper to me that they are HIV positive, but they fear telling their pastor.*

# RECENT HONORS FOR THE CENTER'S GLOBAL WORK

The Messer Center for Women and Children serving persons infected and affected by AIDS was dedicated in January, 2011, in Namakkal, India. Lighting a special lamp, Indian leaders expressed appreciation for the Center's visionary support and compassion. Dr. Kent D. Messer unveiled a wall photo. The free clinic serves about 1,400 patients per year; on a daily basis treating 75 to 100 women and up to 60 children.

Dr. Bonnie J. Messer was awarded one of three **Leadership Awards** by the C.A.R.E. Foundation, India, for her international work in combating HIV and AIDS, focusing on counseling and care.



(Above, Dr. Joe Thomas lights ceremonial lamp. Left, the free Health Care Center. Center, Bonnie, Don and Kent Messer with N. M. Samuel, M.D., outside home of child-headed AIDS home.)

## UNITED METHODISTS HONOR DR. DON MESSER



Center Executive Director, Dr. Donald E. Messer, was presented one of the inaugural **United Methodist Global AIDS Fund Leadership Awards** in Dallas, Texas. Other recipients included Bishop & Etta Mae Mutti (left above), Dr. Musa Dube, & President and Laura Bush. Messer was cited as having started the Fund, which now has distributed over \$3 million to 175 projects in 37 countries. He also was nominated as **United Methodist of the Year** in 2010 by the *United Methodist Reporter*.

## OMAHA CHURCH ADOPTS 20 ORPHANS

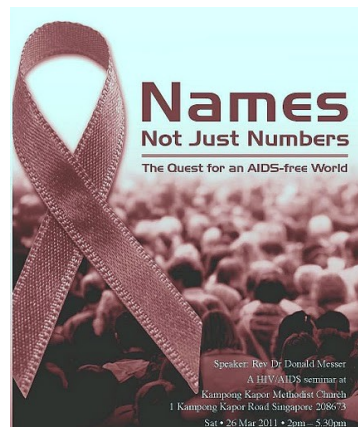
St. James United Methodist Church, Bellevue, Nebraska, has "adopted" 20 AIDS orphans in Kenya at \$240 a year. Led by associate pastor, Rev. Jason D. Kennedy, the congregation outside of Omaha made AIDS their "mission of the month," with Dr. Messer as speaker.



(L to r: Dr. Don Messer, Rev. Russ Tompkins, and Rev. Jason Kennedy.)

## SINGAPORE LECTURES

Various lectures and sermons have been scheduled in Singapore in March, 2011, by Dr. Don Messer. He will speak at Trinity Theological College on "Ending Hunger: Beyond Random Acts of Kindness," and at a HIV seminar at the Kampong Kapur Methodist Church on "Names, Not Just Numbers: The Quest for an AIDS-Free World."



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and Global AIDS**

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**HOW YOUR GIFTS MADE A DIFFERENCE IN 2010**

In 2010, 463 donors contributed to the Center. Thank you friends! Some of the programs that you helped fund around the world:

- **In India**, we were engaged in providing medical care and nutrition, helping tutor young girls, caring for child-headed households, doing eye camps, educating pastors about HIV, and helping USA students do volunteer AIDS work.
- **In Kenya**, we supported more than 150 AIDS orphans, helped a school in the slums of Nairobi, educated pastors/spouses about HIV, & held a seminar with LGBT persons on AIDS.
- **In Malawi**, we assisted an AIDS prison ministry & women's empowerment effort. **In Sri Lanka**, we enabled an AIDS program for war refugees and prisoners.



- **In the United States**, we aided HIV positive African-American homeless and recent released prisoners get shelter, educated Latinos about AIDS, and promoted prevention in western Colorado.
- **With Project C.U.R.E.**, we began the process of shipping about \$400,000 of medical supplies & equipment to Kenya.
- **With Alliance to End Hunger**, we joined policy advocates in promoting increased global food assistance.

*(Photo on left, is an incubator powered with light bulb at Maua Methodist Hospital, Kenya. X-ray machines broken; needs great. Above, young Kenyan boy who lost both parents & sister to AIDS, now heads family household. He got mattress, new roofing, medical care, school uniform and other support through Center programs.)*

