



Don't turn away.

EMBRACE **AIDS**

IN YOUR CHURCH

An event planning guide



EMBRACE AIDS

Christian Reformed World Relief Committee

www.crwrc.org





"AIDS is the goliath challenge that confronts churches worldwide today. It tests the very foundation of our faith and trust in God, challenging us to move beyond moral judgment to extending His grace. Its most horrendous impact is on women and children in the developing world. Their situations raise an acute cry for churches from North America to partner with churches overseas in a ministry of care and hope. I believe AIDS is the single greatest opportunity the church has today to show the size of its heart, to demonstrate how deep and wide God's love is."

—Ida Mutoigo
CRWRC Co-Executive Director

"The more we lack the courage and the will to act, the more we condemn to death our brothers and sisters, our children and our grandchildren. When the history of our times is written, will we be remembered as the generation that turned our backs in a moment of a global crisis or will it be recorded that we did the right thing?"

—Nelson Mandela
Former President of South Africa

"The fight against AIDS is going to take all of our hearts, and minds, and political will. As well as a generous sharing of our resources. But we can, and we must, stop this terrible disease."

—Melinda French Gates
Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation

*"In 2005, synod instructed the CRCNA and its key agencies to unite and mobilize in the struggle against the global AIDS crisis. It urged churches and Christians to play a key role in preventing the spread of AIDS and caring for those infected by it. Synod reminded us that our faith calls us to act in partnership with those who are hurting. The **EMBRACEAIDS** campaign developed by CRWRC provides an ideal way for us to take action on this request so that the Christian Reformed Church can be seen as a beacon of God's hope in the midst of this pandemic. I encourage every CRC congregation and their members to prayerfully consider how they can get involved."*

—Jerry Dykstra
Executive Director
The Christian Reformed Church in North America





Dear Friends,

For thousands of years, the Church has been caring for the sick and the poor, and loving all of God's children. This care and love continues into the present day—through the ministries of churches like yours, denominational ministries like CRWRC, and thousands of independent organizations.

Over the next two years, together with CRWRC your church can turn its loving attention to the 38 million people living with AIDS and the millions more affected by HIV and AIDS in Africa, Asia, and Latin America. Starting with World AIDS Day on December 1 CRWRC is launching an **EMBRACEAIDS** campaign, aiming to educate our church members on the realities of the devastating pandemic and how they can make a difference.

In this booklet, you'll find dozens of ideas of how your church can get involved—from bike-a-thons, to special dinners, to benefit concerts, to writing letters to the Prime Minister/President—all tangible ways your congregation can embrace those suffering because of AIDS. It's not a one size fits all—all churches are different so a variety of options are included. And, many of the ideas work well for co-sponsorship with neighbouring churches, or as outreach opportunities.

Find an event or two (or three!) that suits your church and get it on the calendar now. Recruit your event planners and start rallying people around the reality that **your church, your individual members can make a lasting difference in the lives of many.**

If you have questions as you develop your **EMBRACEAIDS** plans, please don't hesitate to contact us—we're here to support you.

In Christ,

Henrietta Hunse
Church Relations Canada
CRWRC

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Church Relations U.S.
CRWRC





An African Meal

What better way to get people out to an event than to serve food! Having a theme event can also invite people's curiosity and creativity.

Organizing a dinner is fun and offers a variety of opportunities to educate (speaker, display table, activities), advocate (letter signing to government) and fundraise (give everyone a donor envelope or opportunity to give before leaving). If your church is focusing on the AIDS situation in another continent, just switch the theme of your meal.

Who

This is great for all ages. However, you may wish to target a specific age or activity group to participate or organize the event. This is also a great event to get a youth group involved in.

Where

Your church or local community center is probably the easiest venue choice. A large house or beautiful picnic area can also be an interesting venue.

When

Decide if you want to organize a breakfast, lunch or dinner.

An Example

- Offer African food that is either catered in or organize a potluck.
- Decorate the space according to the theme.
- Set up a CRWRC table with information on their AIDS work in Africa (or another place in the world).
- Invite a guest speaker from CRWRC or a local HIV and AIDS organization.
- Set up a petition table to collect signatures for a letter to the Prime Minister/President or a Minister of Parliament/Congressperson.
- Organize a short activity that teaches facts and figures about AIDS.
- Collect names of people who want to start an AIDS awareness committee at the church.
- Remember: beside educating, advocating, and fundraising, you want to have **fun!**

Possible Event Titles

Inviting Africa to the Table

Extending the Table

Food for Thought



Singing for AIDS

Inviting talents from our communities is always fun. Getting people to share their instrumental skills or showing off their vocal cords in a space other than the church service, can be a good time for all. You may also want to consider inviting a well-known musician to play a concert for AIDS. Many artists are looking for ways to get involved in social justice and everyone is looking for a night of entertainment!

Who

This is a great event for all ages. If the event is scheduled for late evening, young children may be excluded.

Where

Organize the event outside the church building. Since you are there every Sunday, it is often refreshing to change the venue for a fundraiser like this. There are often discounts available for an event of this kind.

When

Any time of the year is a great time for concerts. Of course when the weather is a little cooler, people may be more inclined to come to an indoor event.

An Example

- Decide if you will invite a known singer or have people from your church community perform. A combination can also work well.
- Decide on the concert date.
- Make fliers for the church mail boxes and the neighbourhood. Especially if you have invited a guest musician or band, the public will want to know. This is a great way to get people in the area connected to your church.
- Organize the evening: snacks, drinks, Master of Ceremonies, fundraising call, etc. You will have to decide if your ticket price is going to be where you raise funds **or** if you expect donations during the event.
- It can also be fun to organize a silent auction during the concert.
- Don't forget a table with CRWRC resources and other AIDS-related material.

Possible Event Titles

Singing Songs for Righting Wrongs
Songs of Hope





An AIDS Workshop

Many people believe they can do little to make a difference in the AIDS crisis. Worse yet, many people believe this disease does not involve or affect them. A workshop breaking myths surrounding HIV and AIDS, and an education event that teaches people how to get involved, can be both enlightening and empowering.

Who

This workshop is intended for adults and/or young people. Mixing ages can be exciting; separating adults from young people can sometimes encourage deeper probing and questioning.

Where

The church meeting space is a good venue. You will need tables and chairs to allow for group work.

When

Any time is a good time. Connecting it to an AIDS church service or an AIDS Day can be more meaningful.

An Example

- Set the workshop date. Try to connect it to another AIDS-related event.
- Make announcements in the bulletin and from the pulpit.
- Invite CRWRC staff to facilitate the workshop **or** invite someone in your community to facilitate it. It is recommended that the event is organized by a different person than the facilitator.
- Decide on the program of the event. For example, you may wish to include the *HIV and AIDS: Stories from Kenya* DVD, have an AIDS dinner/lunch, write the Prime Minister/President, or other fundraising activity.
- Snacks and drinks are always appreciated, regardless of the length of the workshop.
- Include an “action planning” component to your workshop.

Possible Event Titles

Walking in Someone Else's Shoes

Working to Understand



Biking for AIDS

Everyone has raised money for a bike-a-thon, walk-a-thon or swim-a-thon. It is a fun group activity that can involve little preparation. Of course there are many more “a-thons” to consider when you are making your decision: how about a canoe-a-thon, dance-a-thon, read-a-thon, dollmaking-a-thon, hike-a-thon, or hockey-a-thon. The ideas are endless. All you have to do is find the idea that **your** congregation will get excited about.

Who

The target audience will depend on the event you decide on. Most of the above ideas will invite all ages.

Where

You will need an appropriate venue for the activity you decide on. You may want to consider having your “a-thon” stretch over a period of a month or two. If you collect miles/kilometers of your walking over two months with the goal of symbolically “walking” across your state/province, there is a greater chance for media coverage, AIDS awareness-raising and fundraising. Something like dollmaking or reading will also take more time.

When

This will vary depending on the event chosen. The goal is to be as much in the public eye as possible.

An Example

- Decide on the “a-thon” that would be most meaningful and fun for your church; everyone will be different.
- Decide on the length of time it will run and what your goal is; goals help push us to strive for the best.
- Design a flier and sponsorship sheet.
- Make announcements in the bulletin and from the pulpit that the church is embarking on this project (this will give more ownership of the idea).
- Post visual reminders and challenge the church to get people involved.
- Organize the event (food, drinks, AIDS information table, etc).

Possible Event Titles

Ride for Life

Exercise Awareness





AIDS Quilt

Many people enjoy doing arts and crafts, and designing an AIDS quilt is a great way to give people a tool to communicate about this terrible pandemic. Quilts can be made with construction paper and markers (great for small children) or fabric with buttons, beads and/or thread. Reading a picture book like *A Name on the Quilt* by Jeannine Atkins and Tad Hills, can help enliven the creative process. Making quilts to give to AIDS patients in your community can also be a powerful expression of love. Be sure to call the hospital or hospice office in your area before you begin, to ensure that they accept gifts of quilts.

Who

The most obvious target group for this AIDS event is women. However, children and youth will also enjoy being challenged to be creative and communicate messages of hope and despair in a quilt.

Where

You will need enough table space to be able to spread the supplies out and work freely. Although this is great community building and educational event when done as a group, pieces could also be taken home and returned to church over a period of time. Indoors is best.

When

Making a quilt can be done at any time.

An Example

- Decide whether you are inviting a specific group to work on your AIDS quilt **or** whether the entire church is welcome.
- Decide whether you will work on site as a group **or** if pieces can be worked on at home and collected over a period of time.
- Decide what education component will be done before the making of the quilt. Where this is in response to an AIDS sermon, AIDS evening or AIDS 3-part workshop series, it is recommended that the quilt is made **after** learning about the issue.
- Prepare your materials. For a construction paper quilt you will need: a variety of colours of (pre-cut) paper, magazines, scissors, glue and a variety of fun craft materials. For the fabric quilt you will need: (pre-cut) jean or fabric squares, buttons, beads, fabric markers and other fun materials.
- Ask a person(s) to assemble the quilt when all the pieces are collected.

Possible Event Titles

Threads of Hope



Fasting for AIDS

Many people have participated in a hunger fast. This is fasting to remember those affected and infected by HIV and AIDS. This disease continues to ravage families, communities, generations, and entire populations. Taking something out of our daily routine can help us focus on this pandemic, reflect on our personal involvement, and plan for action.

For some, fasting from food can be too challenging and not possible. Taking some other valued activity out of our lives can have the same affect. Consider removing any of the following, to focus on those who have little or none:

- Television
- Electronics
- Coffee
- Sugar

The objective is simply to do something to help you focus on the AIDS pandemic. What can you do?

Who

A 24-36 hour food fast is recommended for people 13 years old and older. A fast from other items can be open to all ages.

Where

If it is a 1-day fast, it is most effect to stay together for the entire length of time. Depending on the size of the group, the church or a house can be used.

When

A fast can be anywhere from 1 day (total food fast) to 2 months (alternative theme). If it covers an extended amount of time, debriefing sessions should be planned throughout to support and encourage the learning.

An Example

- You can follow the CRWRC FastForward guide (www.crwrc.org/fastforward)

Possible Event Title

Pausing to Remember





Talk to Children about AIDS

To ensure a safer, healthier and more inclusive world children need to know about HIV and AIDS. Children's books are an easy and often powerful tool to teach and stimulate discussion. Go to the [EMBRACEAIDS](http://www.embraceaids.org) website (www.embraceaids.org) for a collection of picture books, graphic novels and chapter books for young readers uncovering facts and stories about this disease. We need to break the silence...starting with our children.

Who

Young and old can enjoy a good picture book and story. Using them with your children will be the most natural fit.

Where

You can use an AIDS book in your children's worship, Sunday School or church service. Having them available in your church library is also valuable.

When

It is most effective to use a book as part of an AIDS lesson or series of lessons. Reading a story out of *Our Stories, Our Songs: African Children Talk About AIDS* by Deborah Ellis, can be effective and powerful from the pulpit during an AIDS sermon. Using parts of a book rather than a book in its entirety can allow for more use and applications.

An example

- Determine which group(s) will study HIV and AIDS in your church.
- Request resources from CRWRC, purchase at least 1 children's book and study the [EMBRACEAIDS](http://www.embraceaids.org) website for ideas and information.
- Plan your lessons.
- Plan or invite the children to think of ways they can share their learning with the congregation. For greater learning and impact, connect your lessons with fundraising (like Penny Mountain), advocacy (like letters to the Prime Minister/President) and artistic expression (like an AIDS quilt).

Possible Event Titles

Kids and AIDS

You Need to Join the Fight, Too!



Penny Mountain

Children want and need to be involved in social justice. Stimulating thinking and action in this area from a young age raises the likelihood of them being active as adults.

It is important that children are involved in tithing, donating and fundraising for a variety of causes. While collecting coins every week, they will learn how things we take for granted can be used to help others.

Who

This is a fun and easy project to do with children of all ages. Everyone has loose change around the house, and kids love to collect it!

Where

You will need to find a place to pile the coins. It works especially well when the coins are on the ground or a table somewhere very public.

A word of caution: the pile gets extremely heavy, so designate a strong surface for the collection. A wheelbarrow might be fun!

When

This is a project you want to have running over a period of 4-8 weeks. It takes a while for people to collect and bring in their coins.

An Example

- Have at least 1 AIDS lesson with your children's groups before starting the project to prepare them for the work.
- Together plan how the money will be collected and where it will remain for the entire time of the project.
- Put an announcement in the church bulletin and any other place announcements are posted or shared.
- Collect the money every week; a short announcement, prayer request or reflection on AIDS can be offered by the children.
- Have a team that will gather the coins, bag them and bring them to the bank. It gets **extremely** heavy!
- Children should announce the total collected with a word of thanks.

Possible Event Titles

Penny Mountain

The Difference a Penny Can Make

A Penny for Your Thoughts





Care Network

What better way to walk with Christ than to reach out to the needy around you. Locate an AIDS hospice, support center or organization that provides for the needs of people living with HIV or AIDS. Ask how your church community can be involved in the work they do. Often there is a need for people to:

- pray
- spend quality time in conversation
- go for walks
- bring meals
- do errands
- and other daily activities.

Who

This type of volunteer work is often best done by adults, although in some cases there may also be a need or possibility for interaction with young people.

Where

Often this work will be at the care facility or at people's home. If you have someone in your church living with HIV or AIDS, your support will be more natural and similar to how you care for other special needs in your congregation.

When

This will be determined by the parties involved. However, once a week is often a good place to start.

An Example

- Determine what possibilities there are in your neighborhood to care for and support people living with HIV and AIDS.
- Invite interested people to come to an information meeting. **It is advisable** to initiate this type of group **after** some education and awareness-raising work.
- Link interest of your group to need of the care facility. Realize that some people may feel more comfortable visiting in a group of two or with a person of the same gender.
- Debrief regularly to share what you are learning, how you are helping and where there is more need. Doing this with the congregation and with the wider CRC community is also recommended.

Possible Event Titles

Our Church Cares





Even More Ideas...

An AIDS event can be *as small as* having a few people over to watch and discuss an AIDS movie, and *as big as* organizing an AIDS weekend with African dancers, invited speakers, exhibits and an AIDS march. If you are still wondering what AIDS event to organize, consider one of the following:

- start a fundraising thermometer in your church that will measure the funds raised over an extended period of time
- invite a top speaker to your community; for example, Stephen Lewis
- organize a silent auction
- join an organized trip overseas to visit partners working in the area of HIV and AIDS
- organize a candlelight service
- put **EMBRACEAIDS** information on your church resource table, in people's church mailboxes or in the bulletin
- invite an HIV-positive guest speaker
- host an AIDS prayer service
- choose an AIDS book for your book club e.g. *Race Against Time* by Stephen Lewis
- invite children to write the Prime Minister/President or your Minister of Parliament/Congressperson
- organize a canoe-a-thon
- join or organize an AIDS march
- initiate a poetry or art contest with theme of fragility and hope
- preach a sermon on HIV and AIDS or as part of a series on justice
- buy AIDS books for your church library
- have a Red Ribbon Day
- "walk your state/province" for AIDS by counting daily miles/kilometers
- start an **EMBRACEAIDS** bulletin board in your church for news on the campaign
- invite your youth to graffiti "Stop AIDS" banners to hang in and around your church
- start an AIDS committee that meets regularly to plan education, advocacy and fundraising events





Tips for Success!

The following tips will assure your **EMBRACEAIDS** event is a success while maximizing its impact:

- Organize a working committee to do all the planning.
- Organize your event well in advance.
- Invite the expertise and talents in your church and communities.
- Choose an event that will invite a variety of ages and interests.
- Include a *combination* of the following: prayer, action, advocacy, education and fundraising. This will maximize the impact of the event.
- Set your goals high and rise to the challenge! We are building a movement to fight the AIDS pandemic and support for **EMBRACEAIDS**.
- Advertise far and wide about what you are doing and why.
- Invite the public to build awareness and solidarity in your wider community.

Share your Story!

People in CRC and non-CRC communities are interested in knowing what you are doing to stop AIDS. Here are some suggestions for reaching out and inviting others in:

- Write a brief description of what you are planning, along with the date, time and place, and submit it to the Community Events section of your **local newspaper**.
- Invite a **local reporter** to your event. They are always looking for a story.
- Take **photographs** and send them with a short write-up of your event to embraceaids@crcna.org in the U.S. or embraceaids@crcna.ca in Canada for the **EMBRACEAIDS** webpage.
- Write a short story for **The Banner**, **Christian Courier** or other **CRC publication**. They love hearing how churches are involved in social justice. If you give them a call ahead of time, there is a good chance they will send a photographer and/or writer to your event!
- Write a short story for your **bulletin** and/or church **bulletin board**.
- Start a **blog** about your **EMBRACEAIDS** work.
- Post a short video on **YouTube** of your event.

BREAK THE SILENCE ... anyway you can.



HIV and AIDS Resources

- **EMBRACEAIDS** brochure
Order copies to hand out at your AIDS event, insert in your bulletin or use in a workshop.
- *HIV and AIDS: Stories from Kenya* (a DVD)
This DVD contains 3 segments: 10 minutes, 3 minutes, and a short commercial. They are great for stimulating discussion, inserting into an AIDS sermon, including in a post-service CRWRC announcement or starting your AIDS event.
- **EMBRACEAIDS** brochure for youth
Order copies of this 16-page pocket size youth brochure to stimulate creative ideas for youth education, advocacy and fundraising events.
- Letter to the Prime Minister or President
Including a petition or letter signing component to your AIDS event is easy. Contact us for your copies of the CRWRC letter to Prime Minister/President or Member of Parliament/Congressperson.
- Guest speakers
If you are having trouble finding a guest speaker who is comfortable and knowledgeable in talking about AIDS and the AIDS work of CRWRC, give us a call. We have a speaker for you.

Visit our Website at www.embraceaids.org

The CRWRC **EMBRACEAIDS** website has a wealth of resources, including:

- Fast Facts About AIDS
- What CRWRC is Doing
- Education materials
- Worship resources
- Activities
- Presentations
- Stories
- Articles
- Sample letter to the Prime Minister or President





Contact Us!

For more creative ideas or support on your planning:

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 CRWRC is an agency of the Christian Reformed Church (CRC). To learn more about the CRC's work in North America and around the world, visit www.crcna.org

