

## MCC Global HIV/AIDS Ministry

# HIV/AIDS Truth and Action

August 2007

*Tearing Down Walls! Building Up Hope!*

### MCC General Conference Review

1. Global Justice Day
2. HIV/AIDS Breakfast with Rev. Elder Freda Smith
3. Rev. Robert Griffin honored at HIV/AIDS Breakfast
4. HIV/AIDS Plenary with Rev. Elder Hong Tan and *Thriving With HIV* Panel
5. AIDS and the "*Kairotic Moment*" Workshop
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*God is calling Metropolitan Community Churches into a new era of global social justice and Christian advocacy. This is our 'kairotic moment,' a chance to speak a resounding 'yes' to God and to the people around the world most deeply impacted by the AIDS pandemic. In this time, we take a revolutionary leap into our next 40 years of Christian service by advocating and teaching the sacred balance between healing and*



### Global Justice Day

Sunday, July 1, 2007

*Healing and Social Justice: A Sacred Balance Grows from Our Experience*

During the Global Justice Day, a prelude offering to the 2007 MCC General Conference, of worship, workshops, and sharing, Joshua Love, MCC Program Director for the Global HIV/AIDS Ministry presented an hour and a half workshop/spiritual study on MCC's emerging Global HIV/AIDS Ministry. In that brief session Joshua opened a dialogue with the attendees on where strengths and gifts have grown from our longstanding work as first-responders to the AIDS pandemic as well as envisioning next steps in our cultural and programmatic expansion into the future. Participants joined in a lively discussion, held in three languages; Portuguese, Spanish, and English, on how to expand the voices we hear, celebrate, and learn from in our Global HIV/AIDS Ministry. There were young new leaders, mature leaders, couples, singles, men, women, transgender people, and a variety of ethnicities present. The beautiful conversation that grew from this diverse collective brought forth truthful questions about how to grow our ministry authentically, with respect to our gifts and talents, and in true partnership with people affected by and infected with HIV/AIDS around the globe.

The participants crafted the following purpose statement on July 1, 2007 -- MCC's Global Justice Day -- to call our communities to action:

**"We the people of Metropolitan Community Churches around the globe, commit to tell the truth that HIV/AIDS remains one of the most urgent issues facing the world today. We accept the sacred responsibility to speak prophetically about HIV/AIDS and use our multicultural and pluralistic experiences to grow and develop this ministry."**

#### HIV/AIDS Workshop/Spiritual Study Participants

Special thanks to Rev. Pat Bumgardner, Senior Pastor, MCC New York and Chair of the Global Justice Team; Rev. Nancy Wilson, Moderator Metropolitan Community Churches; Bradley Curry, Assistant to Rev. Pat Bumgardner including staff support for Global Justice Team; Rev. Elder Diane Fisher, coordinating MCC Ministry in Region 5 including the Eastern Europe Initiative; Connie Meadows, Assistant to the Moderator

social justice.

**Joshua L. Love**

Metropolitan Community Churches  
Program Director  
Global HIV/AIDS Ministry  
Drug Literacy Program

[MCC Global HIV/AIDS  
Ministry](#)



**Joshua  
L. Love**

The second half of 2007 began as fast as the first half ended! General Conference was filled with wonderful experiences and opportunities to meet new people whose hearts are filled with passion.

Joshua's travels begin as a facilitator of a retreat weekend **Aug 3-5 held at Open Door Center for Spirituality in Boyds, MD** followed by facilitating the **Men's Retreat at Wichita Falls MCC in Wichita Falls, TX.** You can read more about these retreats below.

The remainder of 2007 is:

**September 7-10**

MCC Omaha  
Omaha, Nebraska

**September 21-24**

Exodus MCC  
Abilene, Texas

**October 3 - 15**

Melbourne, Australia  
Sydney, Australia  
Travel with Reg 1 Elder  
Rev. Elder Ken Martin

**October 19 - 21**

MCC Toronto  
Toronto, Ontario

**November 2 - 5 (TBA)**

Minneapolis, MN  
MCC Drug Literacy Program  
/ Pride Institute

**November 20 - December 2**

and member of the Multi-Cultural Task Force; Rev. Fernando Frontan, pastor Casa de Luz ICM, Monterrey, Nuevo Leon, Mexico and Latin America activist; Rev. Jide Macaulay, pastor, House of Rainbow, Lagos, Nigeria; Rev. Boon Lin Ngeo, serving with MCC New York and coordinating MCC Ministry in Malaysia; Rev. Robert Griffin, serving as Academic Dean of Light University with Sunshine Cathedral and coordinating Ministry in Jamaica; Joshua Love, MCC Program Director for Global HIV/AIDS Ministry and Drug Literacy Program for their on-going work in bringing awareness to Global Justice needs and initiative at this year's Global Justice Day of the General Conference and World Jubilee.

Additional thanks to all the Global Justice Day presenters, volunteers and attendees.

To stay in touch with current Global Justice and Human Rights news and events please visit the [Justice Page of the Moderator's Corner](#).

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## HIV/AIDS Breakfast with Guest Speaker Rev. Elder Freda Smith

Thursday, July 5, 2007



*The Early Activist Years of MCC*

**Rev. Elder Freda Smith**

Photo by Mark Hahn

At the HIV/AIDS Breakfast held during the 2007 MCC General Conference and World Jubilee a large gathering of people from around the world joined together to commemorate our history, acknowledge our leaders, and imagine our dedicated future. Rev. Elder Freda Smith, a pioneer of the MCC movement and feminist preacher, offered a powerful look at our early activist years in the AIDS crisis. She called on us to remember our history and to tell our stories before they are forgotten. Her insightful analysis drew a line from the personal struggle of our founder, Rev. Troy Perry, to the people who formed the seedling of MCC as a "gay church." From that era of gay liberation she called us forward through the tension and growth of becoming a church that could serve gay men and lesbians, the "inclusive language and feminist church." With compassion and precision she gently guided us into the time when a disease moved among us and began to take our beloved community from us, killing swiftly without medications or solutions, the days when we became known as the "church with AIDS." She challenged us to be a church that remembers our past tells our stories with pride and respect. She called on us to rally our memories into a ministry of presence that honors our ancestors, our lost family, and our beloved pioneers. Rev. Elder Freda's speech served as a powerful start

NOVA MCC  
Fairfax, VA;  
New Covenant MCC  
Columbia, MD;  
Vision of Hope MCC  
Lancaster, PA

We are building the 2008 calendar for MCC's HIV/AIDS Global Ministry. If you would like to find out about open dates, please contact Christy Ebner at [ChristyEbner@MCCchurch.net](mailto:ChristyEbner@MCCchurch.net) or (214) 325-7017.



**"Living Positively"  
Retreat**

August 3-5  
Open Door Center  
for Spirituality  
Open Door MCC  
Boyd's, MD, USA

Join us for a retreat for those living with HIV/AIDS and their partners and/or caregivers. Explore with each other what it means to live positively and develop a spirituality that gives witness to God's power in the face of HIV. Join the Open Door Community on August 5th for Worship and a presentation of how the Church can be in ministry to and with those living with HIV/AIDS. The cost for the entire retreat is \$79.

For more information please [clickhere](#).



**"From Isolation to  
Inspiration"**

August 10-11  
Wichita Falls MCC  
2007 Men's Retreat  
Wichita Falls, Texas

Join us for WFMCC's very first Men's Retreat: **From Isolation to Inspiration.**

We are going to have a great time getting to know one another, and we are going to share together about the challenges of living as gay and bisexual men in Wichita Falls. We will be talking about things like:

\* Isolation and the need for community,

to an amazing day of the MCC General Conference, focused on HIV/AIDS and healing.

The manuscript of Rev. Elder Freda's talk will be made available in the near future through the MCC Global HIV/AIDS Ministry pages at [www.MCCchurch.org/HIV](http://www.MCCchurch.org/HIV).

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## Rev. Robert Griffin Honored at HIV/AIDS Breakfast

Thursday, July 5, 2007



**Joshua L. Love and Rev. Robert Griffin**  
Photo by Mark Hahn

Rev. Robert Griffin led MCC's denominational HIV/AIDS effort, during the late 1990's, partnering with Rev. Elder Jim Mitulski and Rev. Elder Hong Tan, in response to a powerful call from the grassroots of MCC. When advances in medical science and treatment options in the United States slowed the death and dying of many in our churches an unexpected side-effect was generated, public discourse on HIV/AIDS began to slow and quiet. Those years saw many people who had lived in anticipation of the end of their lives needing to reconstruct their lives, careers, and relationship to longevity. Rev. Robert took seriously the needs of people who, at times, felt they were losing their voices and needed pastoral care and leadership to regain their relationship to life. The MCC Global HIV/AIDS Ministry honored Rev. Robert Griffin for his excellence in ministry, service, support, and activism on behalf of people living with and affected by HIV/AIDS at the HIV/AIDS Breakfast of the 2007 General Conference.

- \* Spirituality and Sexuality
- \* Sexual Health and Wellness
- \* Loving Ourselves and Others

There is no charge to attend and all those who identify as men are welcome to participate. We will begin Friday Aug. 10 at 6:30 pm. Dinner is provided. Saturday Aug. will begin at 9:00 breakfast provided.

Please contact Rev. Lea Brown at [lbrown@wichitafallsmcc.org](mailto:lbrown@wichitafallsmcc.org) or (940) 322-4100 by Thursday Aug. 9.

For more information please [click here](#).

### Tell the Story

Metropolitan Community Churches, at our heart, hold a sacred balance between healing and justice. Wherever these two elements converge in the world, it is likely that our calling from God will be put to good use. AIDS is not the only social justice work we do. Yet, in a critical sense, if we had not been first-responders, saturated to a person by AIDS, then we might never have matured into the passionate advocates we are today.

After 25 years of service to people living with HIV/AIDS, Metropolitan Community Churches received a renewed call from God. This era of rebirth expands our vision to one of global awareness. While our hands do not yet reach into every community affected by AIDS, our prayers and our love, assuredly, do. Through the combination of local church ministries, regional initiatives, and global outreach, Metropolitan Community Churches Global HIV/AIDS Ministry serves as a voice of ethics in public healthcare and research, a provider of respite and care to those affected by this disease, and as educators on the cutting edge of wellness.

In this time, we emerge into the global AIDS pandemic as survivors, as advocates, as spiritual leaders, and as learned voices for ethics and equity in the care and treatment of all human beings. In all the many ways that God has blessed us as a people with healing and restoration from HIV/AIDS, we go forward to serve others who now stand in the fire of this pandemic.



## Rev. Elder Hong Tan and "*Thriving with HIV*" Plenary Panel

Thursday, July 5, 2007

**From left to right: Rev. Elder Jim Mitulski, Rev. Alejandro Escoto, Rev. Elder Hong Tan, Rev. John Magisano, Rev. Nokuthula Dhladhla, Rev. Dr. Karen Ziegler and Joshua L. Love**  
Photo by Mark Hahn

Rev. Elder Hong Tan served Metropolitan Community Churches as a member of our Board of Elders for ten years. He was the first Asian ordained in Metropolitan Community Churches and the first indigenous European to serve as a District Coordinator. Rev. Elder Hong founded MCC of North London and served as its pastor during the time he also served as an Elder. His work with Metropolitan Community Churches brings passionate advocacy to members of our Asian/Pacific Islander communities and people living with and affected by HIV/AIDS around the world. He is currently the first Sexual Health Program Director for the National Health Service in London, England.

Rev. Elder Hong brought a poignant message to the HIV/AIDS Plenary of the 2007 General Conference and World Jubilee. He illustrated the global impact of HIV/AIDS through touching personal testimony and analysis of the public health response that has shaped much of the discourse about HIV/AIDS for the last two and a half decades. He said, "the global impact of HIV is that HIV touches us all, surprises us all whether we live with or are affected by HIV or not."

Rev. Elder Hong reminded us that while there has been progress made in medical options in portions of the world, and while HIV prevention methods have improved, and while there are ongoing public health efforts to reduce new infections, AIDS is still the greatest health challenge in the world. He said that there have been many advances but they are not making it to enough people around the world. People are getting infected and dying of AIDS all over the world because they do not have access to these improvements. This failure to save lives and distribute much-needed resources, "is a sin," stated Rev. Elder Hong.

His message covered a variety of voices and methods being employed in this work and challenged us to grow our perspectives on HIV/AIDS ministry. Rev. Elder Hong was joined by a panel of respondents who shared perspectives on his message; Rev. John Magisano, New York, New York, USA; Rev. Nokuthula Dhladhla, Johannesburg, South Africa; Rev. Alejandro Escoto, Los Angeles, California, USA; Rev. Dr. Karen Ziegler, Durham, North Carolina, USA.

Rev. Elder Hong rallied our spirits with examples of successful work being done all over the world to connect people living with HIV/AIDS to one another and to necessary medical, spiritual, and social

support.

He inspired us to keep our longstanding commitment to work in HIV/AIDS and to remember that each of us has a role to play in this lifesaving ministry. Rev. Steve Pieters closed the gathering in prayer.

The manuscript of his talk will be made available through the MCC Global HIV/AIDS Ministry pages at [www.MCCchurch.org/hiv](http://www.MCCchurch.org/hiv) in the near future.



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## **Rev. Elder Jim Mitulski**

Photo by Mark Hahn

In a pivotal moment at the 2005 General Conference and World Jubilee in Calgary, Alberta, Canada, Rev. Elder Jim Mitulski helped Metropolitan Community Churches to collectively shine a light on our past journey with HIV/AIDS while also calling us to action for the future.

Rev. Elder Jim showed us that Metropolitan Community Churches had a new call to HIV/AIDS ministry in this day and time...that there was a sacred marriage, a partnership between healing (both of the self and of the world) and social justice. It can be an inconvenient responsibility to recognize because it means that we are as responsible for those suffering and surviving AIDS around the globe as we are for the experience of AIDS in our own bodies and communities. Rev. Elder Jim reminded us with his leadership, his passion, and his astute analysis that we are a Church called into places that are not always convenient and easy. He challenged us to rise to new levels of commitment.

He revealed to us the possibility of a partnership with the Y. A. Flunder Foundation to support work being done with children and women in Zimbabwe.

He also inspired a moment of long overdue healing on behalf of the unsung heroism and dedication of women who had worked tirelessly in the justice efforts to stop the spread of AIDS and acquire healthcare and support for those people, largely men in the early AIDS crisis in Metropolitan Community Churches, who became ill and all too often died.

Attendees of the 2005 General Conference in Calgary wore t-shirts with "HIV+" printed on the front around the city and at the Conference to show solidarity and offer strength to people living with and affected by HIV/AIDS around the world.

He took a risk to open up a conversation in a new way with both new and old voices at the table in the hope that collectively Metropolitan Community Churches would choose to respond from our spiritual and ethical core.

We did!

The last two years have been a journey of finding AIDS in the here and now. The Global HIV/AIDS Ministry of Metropolitan Community Churches thanks and honors Rev. Elder Jim Mitulski for his inspired leadership and prophetic challenge.

