

# God's People Are Tested



Know your HIV status

An Open Pastoral Letter to the Residents of Washington, DC from Your Lutheran Neighbors:

Washington, DC is facing a crisis. According to a recent report from the District of Columbia government, over 3% of DC resident age 12 or older are living with HIV or AIDS, an epidemic that rivals infection rates in countries considered to be severely affected by this disease.

The HIV/AIDS epidemic affects us all. Rather than acknowledging that impact, too often churches have shied away from confronting HIV/AIDS – despite the fact that many of our members and their loved ones are HIV positive or are living with AIDS.

Today, we declare our commitment to tackle the stigma and discrimination associated with HIV/AIDS and to educate our congregations on the importance of HIV testing.

We believe that in our churches – as pastors, lay leaders, and members – we are called by Jesus Christ to care for each other and for all in our community affected and infected by HIV. To that end, we commit to:

- Extend our love, support, and compassion to all, especially those living with HIV/AIDS;
- Eliminate the stigma associated with those who are living with HIV/AIDS;
- Generate open dialogue in our congregations in order to make our churches safe places to talk about HIV/AIDS;
- Challenge our members to examine any fears or misperceptions of HIV/AIDS that we harbor; and to
- Encourage our members to be tested for HIV.

Care for those who are sick and suffering is close to the heart of God. By making these commitments we are witnessing to God's love and standing with the whole Church to help overcome the HIV/AIDS epidemic in our community.

In Christ's Love,

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**Metropolitan Washington, D.C., Synod**  
**Evangelical Lutheran Church in America**

God's work. Our hands.