

## XII — ACQUIRED IMMUNODEFICIENCY SYNDROME

Acquired immunodeficiency syndrome (AIDS) caused by the human immunodeficiency virus (HIV) is a growing epidemic that may surpass the ravages of any plague in human history. In this decade, tens of thousands of North Americans have contracted AIDS and more than a million North Americans are carriers of the AIDS virus. For those who have contracted AIDS, currently there is no known medical cure, and thus the disease is fatal. The evidence is not clear concerning the long-term results of those who are carriers of the AIDS virus.

We extend Christian compassion to all who have acquired this disease by whatever means (John 3:16; 1 John 2:2; Luke 10:25-31). We urge the provision of spiritual, emotional, and even physical care for them to the same degree that patients with other life-threatening diseases receive. Christians, following the example of Christ, should seek to minister to HIV infected persons. In keeping with our historical precedents (e.g., the furtherance of medical missions, retirement homes, inner city missions, etc.) we urge our local churches to become involved with the development of new ministries to provide compassionate care for persons with AIDS. They need the hope and peace that only the gospel of Jesus Christ can give them.

We are concerned for both the confidentiality of the infected and the protection of the uninfected. Failure by one who is HIV positive to inform any person who may be exposed to the virus is as morally reprehensible as is discrimination against an identified HIV positive person. We believe that the interests of the uninfected (including an uninfected spouse) have priority over the confidentiality of persons who are HIV positive and persist in high-risk behavior. Furthermore AIDS is first and foremost a public health concern, not a civil rights issue. Hence, any proposed legislation that would confer special “civil rights” on persons afflicted with AIDS but threatens the health of others is totally unacceptable.

The Missionary Church reaffirms the sanctity of marriage and deplores nonmarital sexual intercourse, homosexual practices, and intravenous drug abuse. While we acknowledge that there are innocent sufferers of the disease, the fact remains that the two primary groups of individuals with AIDS in North America to date are practicing homosexual men and drug addicts who share needles.

Family life teaching and sexual education is a God given responsibility of parents. The church’s task is to assist both parents and youth in understanding their sexuality in the context of biblical values. Sexual education alone, however, will not stop the spread of AIDS. Our society needs to understand and acknowledge that there are compelling emotional, philosophical, medical, sociological, historical and biblical reasons for practicing abstinence before marriage and fidelity within marriage. Since God has designed sexual intercourse for monogamous heterosexual marriage alone, and since this form of sexual practice will ultimately help to solve this problem, the Missionary Church calls her people and her world to teach and live by biblical sexual morals.

In conclusion, the Missionary Church recommends the following three responses:

1. Confront the disease as Christ and his disciples dealt directly with the issues of their day (Matt 8:2-3 and 9:35-36).
2. Care for those stricken, with the love of Christ and the good news of hope, forgiveness and salvation (Matt 22:39; Gal 6:2; Matt 7:12).
3. Promote the biblical lifestyle which minimizes the spread of this infection (1 Thess 4:3-4; 1 Cor 6:13, 18-20).

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— Adopted by the 1989 General Conference