

UNITED NATIONS



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REFERENCE:

12 May 2008

Dear Reverend Ferguson,

On behalf of the Secretary-General, I thank you for your letter of 4 April 2008, inviting him to address the interfaith prayer service to be held on the evening of 9 June 2008 at St. Peter's Church in New York.

The Secretary-General appreciates your kind invitation, however, his prior commitments preclude his participation. I am nevertheless pleased to inform you that the Secretary-General has asked Ms. Debbie Landey, Deputy Executive Director of UNAIDS, to deliver a message on his behalf at the service.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "V. Nambiar".

Vijay Nambiar  
Chef de Cabinet

Reverend Christopher Ferguson  
Representative to the United Nations  
UN Headquarters Liaison Office of  
World Council of Churches  
New York

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World Council of Churches

(212) 867-7462

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COMMISSION OF THE CHURCHES ON INTERNATIONAL AFFAIRS OF THE  
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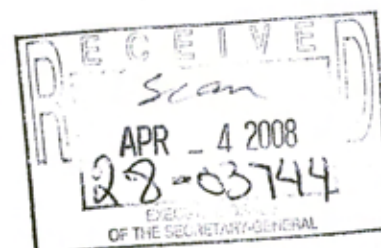
Email: [liaison@wccna.org](mailto:liaison@wccna.org)

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4 April 2008

Secretary General Mr. Ban Ki Moon  
Office of the Secretary General of the United Nations  
United Nations  
New York, NY 10017



Dear Secretary General Mr. Ban Ki Moon,

In coordination with civil society advocacy efforts during the upcoming United Nations High Level Meeting on AIDS, we are planning a 1.5 hour interfaith prayer service at St. Peter's Church on the evening of June 9. The service will commence sharply at 6:30 pm.

St. Peter's has graciously offered their worship space, and a New York based interfaith planning team is planning this powerful service. This is a unique opportunity for the international community to raise our collective voices in remembrance, prayer and hopeful commitment - united for a world without AIDS. In the spirit of global community building, we would be especially grateful if you would be able to contribute your presence to this service with a speech.

I have enclosed the concept paper for the event with this invitation. The prayer service will be the culminating point for people of many faith traditions to come together in peace to raise their voices in prayer and a call to action. UNAIDS and UNFPA have both extended their support for the service, and we humbly request your presence at this momentous event. The other UN speaker we have invited is the President of the GA.

Invited guests include ambassadors and civil society attending the review, elected officials, clergy of prominent faith communities, local leadership from AIDS service organizations, people living with HIV or AIDS and faith communities from throughout New York City. The media will also be invited.

If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact our office. On behalf of the planning committee, thank you for your consideration. Your contribution will help make this service a powerful occasion.

Sincerely,

Rev. Christopher Ferguson  
Representative to the United Nations  
World Council of Churches  
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Switzerland

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## **HIV and AIDS - Interfaith Prayer Service**

### **Concept Paper**

1 April 2008

**Concept:** On the evening of 9 June 2008, prior to the 2008 High Level Meeting on AIDS, civil society is leading the planning for an interfaith prayer vigil to pray for continued commitment to end the AIDS pandemic. The objectives of the prayer vigil are as follows:

- To pray for the sincere review of commitments made by government leaders in 2001 and 2006 as a comprehensive response to the HIV and AIDS pandemic;
- To engage greater New York City faith communities in action prior to the review;
- To remember our sisters and brothers who have died from AIDS related causes;
- To promote the dignity and rights of people living with HIV and AIDS; and
- To recognize how global community and family ties are impacted by AIDS.

A planning team is forming to plan a prayer vigil that reflects the faith, passion and love of the many traditions involved. The team is working to include a variety of representatives from many faith traditions. Prayers and reflections from within these faith traditions will lift up the commitments in the political declaration and emerging issues during the service.

The planning team is working closely with the support of organizations which are committed to respecting and uplifting the voices of faith communities through this prayer vigil, including UNAIDS and UNFPA.

**Location:** St. Peter's Lutheran Church (54<sup>th</sup> and Lexington) [www.stpeterslutheran.org](http://www.stpeterslutheran.org)

Saint Peter's was the first religious institution in the city to perform funeral and memorial services for people who died during the emerging AIDS epidemic. To this day, the sanctuary still houses some of their remains.

**Length:** The service will commence at 6:30 pm and last no longer than 1.5 hours. There is a possibility for a reception afterwards.

**Speakers:** The planning team would like to create space for both the U.N. Secretary General as well as the President of the General Assembly to participate in the proceedings of the service. Additionally, based on the previous service, the planning team will work to incorporate participation from leaders of the following traditions: Bahá'í, Buddhism, Christianity, Hinduism, Islam, Judaism, Quaker, Shintoism, Sikhism and Zoroastrianism (*this is neither a definite nor limited list*).

**Background:** Prior to the 2006 United Nations Comprehensive Review and High-Level Meeting on HIV and AIDS, faiths communities in New York City gathered at St. Bartholomew's Church to pray for renewed commitment to overcome AIDS. The service included prayers lifted up from ten faith traditions, a call to action, a message from the UN Secretary General delivered by the Deputy Executive Director of UNAIDS, a message from the Executive Director of UNFPA as well as the President of the General Assembly. The service was well attended and endorsed by over seventy local and international organizations; additionally, it was well supported by UNAIDS.

#### **Contact Persons:**

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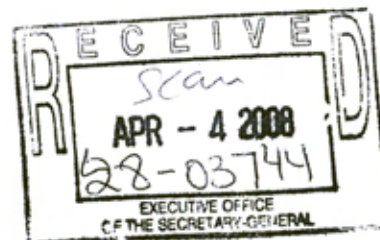
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No of pages: 3 (including this one)

Subject: **Invitation to speak**

From: Catherine Bordeau  
Date: 4 April 2008



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