

# Center for the Church and Global AIDS Action Newsletter

Fall, 2014  
FOR MORE  
INFORMATION:  
[www.churchand  
globalaids.org](http://www.churchandglobalaids.org)

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## PREVENTING BABIES FROM BEING BORN HIV POSITIVE

Though their parents have HIV, Abun & Ajay were born free of the virus. Unlike nearly 900 babies born every day in the world, they and their mother received anti-retroviral medicine to stop the transmission in childbirth, thanks to the free clinic for women & children in India sponsored by the Center for the Church and Global AIDS. The clinic continues to provide parental counseling and medical care for Abun & Ajay.



N. M. Samuel, M.D.

"Every child has a right to be born free of HIV and AIDS," declares medical Professor N. M. Samuel, M.D. "In the USA, almost no children get infected anymore. Why not help the poor?" Denver's *Swinging@AIDS* event raised funds to support ten months of the clinic's operations. **\$4,000 is still needed.** Dr. Samuel, who directs the Namakkal clinic, will keynote the Center's "Spring is a Time for HOPE" brunch May 2, 2015, at the University of Denver. **Save the date!**



Abun and Ajay



Burt Golub, M.D. from Denver,  
reviews available medicine



Register for \$10 breakfast (8:30 to 10 a.m.) by  
contacting [shawnalayman@gmail.com](mailto:shawnalayman@gmail.com)

## BREAKING CHURCH'S SILENCE & STIGMA

Bishop Mary Ann Swenson, World Council of Churches leader, will speak Oct. 18 to "A Gathering to H.E.A.L. (*Helping End AIDS in our Lifetime*)" breakfast at Hope UMC, Greenwood Village, CO. Three Denver pastors (Revs. Eric Strader, Jessica Rooks & Brad Laurvick) will receive Paul & Paula Murphy Awards for promoting marriage equality.



## BILL GRAF: 2015 HERO OF THE YEAR

A lawyer by profession & a humanitarian at heart, Bill Graf, Evergreen, CO, has been named by the Board as the Center's 2015 Hero of the Year. Traveling to Rwanda, Uganda, Kenya, and Haiti at his own expense, Graf has indefatigably raised funds to support distribution of Bibles, condoms, water filters, deworming pills, & malaria nets. He has spoken at AIDS conferences & provided *pro bono* legal services. In Kenya he helped a young girl become a teacher, after her mother died of AIDS. Graf will be honored at the May "Spring is A Time for HOPE Brunch."



# ***“I GOT HIV FROM SATAN”—YET AN AMBASSADOR OF HOPE***

**By Donald E. Messer, Executive Director \***



"I got HIV from Satan." I cringed when Jennifer, a woman in Rwanda, told me how she had become infected with HIV. Before I could protest that you cannot get infected from the devil, I listened more attentively to her story. She explained that during the genocide that killed 800,000 Rwandan citizens twenty years ago, she had been held captive by an older man who impregnated her with three children. And then he left her.

Desperate from poverty, she went to a local church for help. There she was befriended by the bishop, but who had sexual relations with her. As a result, she contracted HIV. When she confronted him, he said he would care for the child if it was a boy baby. When a boy was born she was hopeful, but he gave her only a very small amount of money, and she was left ill and impoverished. When she reported what happened to authorities and other church people, the bishop denied involvement. And people said, "Of course, this didn't happen. Why would the Bishop get involved with such a poor woman like her?" No wonder she says she now finds it hard to go to church. Yes, indeed she was infected by Satan.

But God has raised up an "angel" in a Presbyterian pastor's wife, Beatrice Mukansinga, who has reached out to this HIV positive woman and over 3,000 other women in the years since the genocide. She escaped the massacre because she was out of the country in Kenya when it happened. But her mother, father, and five brothers were killed.



She thought her suffering was the worst, but then she discovered all the vulnerable women and children who were victims. Children abandoned because they were born of rape. Women stigmatized because they were HIV positive. Uneducated girls engaged in "survival sex" in order to eat. Persons disabled because of limbs being cut by hatchets during the mass mayhem.



She founded the Mbwirandumva ("Speak, I'm Listening") Initiative in Kigali, Rwanda, that provides counseling to women, education for income generating jobs, and other social welfare programs. Key to the charity's outreach is trauma counseling led by Beatrice Mbabzi, as they listen and respond to the stories and needs of the women who come for assistance.

The work continues though the genocide happened two decades ago. Today uneducated and impoverished girls and women are being trained in life skills and learn to do baking, pedicures, sewing, and fixing hair. HIV women are organized in support groups and encouraged to faithfully take antiretroviral drugs along with balanced nutrition.

Once trapped in despair, the women leave the Mbwirandumva Initiative calling themselves "ambassadors of hope," reaching out to other women and children in need. Jennifer now speaks out as one of those hopeful ambassadors.

***\* Tom Owens, Bill Graf, & Messer visited Rwanda in July speaking at a Center sponsored workshop helping pastors counsel persons about HIV & AIDS. Gifts are needed to fund programs as described in above article.***

## JOIN VISIT TO INDIA IN JANUARY, 2015



*Share compassion & care*

Plans are underway to visit the Center's primary AIDS programs in early January, 2015. Join in experiencing the rich cultural heritage and dynamic life of south India, while confronting first hand the challenges and dilemmas faced by persons living with hunger, poverty, and HIV. Anticipated is participation in a conference addressing issues of AIDS and human rights. If interested in participating, contact Center Executive Director, Don Messer, 303-877-1955 or globalaids@gmail.com



*Help distribute food to the hungry*



*Light a candle of hope*



*Meet a child-headed household*

*Did you know circumcision can reduce male HIV infection rates by 60%? Rwanda is circumcising two million men over age of 18. Still should use condoms.*



*See eye clinic helping patients*



*Visit families living with HIV*

## CENTER FOCUSES ON KENYA

Faced with the 4th highest number of AIDS infections worldwide, Bishop Catherine Mutua, urges Kenya's people remain a high priority. Programs financed by donor gifts include:

1) Helping 200 orphans yearly at \$150 each for school & family care, 2) Providing support groups for over 750 women & men living with HIV/AIDS



3) Purchasing wheel barrows to provide employment for street children, & 4) Helping sponsor a school struggling to serve children living with AIDS in Nairobi's slums.



***\$50,000 Needed Yearly  
Can You Help?***



***Include the Center for the Church & Global AIDS in your estate planning. Know the joy of making a difference in the years ahead.***



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water dumped on  
your head! Just  
return the enclosed  
envelope. Your  
gifts bring hope  
and health.*



Support the Center on  
Colorado Gives Day  
Tuesday December 9  
Online at  
ColoradoGives.org  
100% goes to charity  
24 hours of giving

## TUSCON, ARIZONA HERE WE COME!

Take a break from the cold weather  
Enjoy the beauty of Arizona

Plan on the weekend  
of March 15, 2015, for a  
**Swinging@AIDS** "best ball" golf event!  
Contact Claudia Svarstad  
at [csvarstad@aol.com](mailto:csvarstad@aol.com)



## PROTECTING HUMAN RIGHTS

If the Center is to support and advocate for persons infected & affected by HIV through programs of education and prevention, then it needs to respect & protect the human rights of lesbian, gay, bi-sexual, and transgendered persons. Alarminglly, in Africa & Asia LGBT persons suffer criminalization and stigmatization. The Center has helped sponsor programs in India, Kenya, Rwanda, and Indonesia to promote human rights, challenging church and culture to overcome bias & bigotry and to embrace all of God's children.

