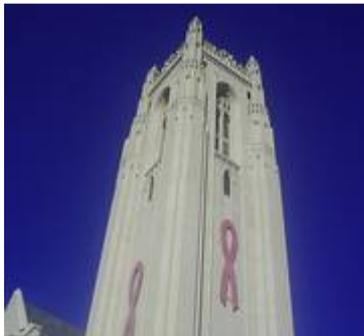


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First-ever summit of religious leaders on HIV with strong WCC presence

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Hollywood United Methodist Church dons the red ribbon, symbol of solidarity with those affected by HIV and AIDS. Photo: [Jason Blanchard](#)

The first-ever Summit of High Level Religious Leaders on HIV and AIDS will be held in Den Dolder, Netherlands, from 22-23 March 2010. It aims to generate greater involvement from religious leaders of many of the world's faiths in the global response to the pandemic.

The World Council of Churches (WCC) will be represented at the summit by two of its presidents – [Abune Paulos](#), patriarch of the Ethiopian Orthodox Tewahedo Church and the Rev. Dr [Ofelia Ortega Suárez](#) of the Presbyterian-Reformed Church in Cuba – as well as by its general secretary, the Rev. Dr [Olav Fykse Tveit](#).

"As religious leaders we have to be just and honest and address the fact that a vast majority of those among us affected by HIV and AIDS belong to a faith community," Tveit said about his participation. "We have to provide leadership to uphold the inherent human dignity of all. This meeting should bring us one step further in our ability as peoples of faith to address how we relate to one another as men and women in a just and compassionate way."

Some 40 Baha'í, Buddhist, Christian, Hindu, Jewish, Muslim and Sikh religious leaders will participate at the summit to explore opportunities to speak out and take action on HIV in order to eliminate stigma and discrimination against people living with HIV.

The religious leaders will also have an opportunity to exchange views with people living with HIV and experts from other sectors involved in the AIDS response.

The summit is organized by the Ecumenical Advocacy Alliance (EAA) – a broad network of churches and Christian organizations including the WCC – along with the Catholic Dutch development organization Cordaid.

The event is supported by the Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs, UNAIDS, the International Network of Religious Leaders Living with or Personally Affected by HIV or AIDS (INERELA+), the World AIDS Campaign and the European Council of Religious Leaders (Religions for Peace).

The World Council of Churches promotes Christian unity in faith, witness and service for a just and peaceful world. An ecumenical fellowship of churches founded in 1948, today the WCC brings together 349 Protestant, Orthodox, Anglican and other churches representing more than 560 million Christians in over 110 countries, and works cooperatively with the Roman Catholic Church. The WCC general secretary is Rev. Dr Olav Fykse Tveit, from the [Lutheran] Church of Norway. Headquarters: Geneva, Switzerland.