

Children's Moments

Believe it or not, it is possible to talk about AIDS with children, even in a worship service. Plan to make an announcement via e-mail or in print to families with children, letting them know that you plan to talk about HIV and AIDS in the worship service the next week. Assure them that you will not be getting into the graphic details of HIV transmission, but that they should be prepared for additional questions about HIV and AIDS that their children may have after the service. Tell them you are happy to talk with them about any questions or concerns they might have. You might consult with parents and other caregivers, sharing resources for talking to children and teens about HIV and AIDS in an age-appropriate way. Some good web resources can be found at

www.pta.org/documents/hiv_eng.pdf

www.childrennow.org/index.php/learn/twk_aids

www.thenationalcampaign.org/parents/default.aspx

A good way to begin the conversation with children in the service of worship is simply to wear an AIDS ribbon on your robe or stole and ask the children if they know what it stands for. Then give an age-appropriate description of AIDS: that it is caused by a tiny germ called a virus; that there is medication to help keep people with HIV live longer, but that there is no cure; that a lot of people all over the world have this virus, but that it's very, very hard to be infected as a child; that it's safe to hug people with HIV, to hold their hands, to swim in the same pool with them, and even to share food and drink.

Tell them that if they ever have any questions about HIV or AIDS they can ask you or their parents. If they ask you questions about how you get HIV beyond what you're comfortable answering, simply tell them that that's a great question for their parents.