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Religious Leaders Responding to the HIV/AIDS Epidemic November 30, 1993

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THE WHITE HOUSE

WASHINGTON

November 26, 1993

BREAKFAST WITH RELIGIOUS LEADERS RESPONDING TO THE HIV/AIDS EPIDEMIC

DATE: November 30, 1993
LOCATION: Old Family Dining Room
TIME: 8:30 a.m. - 9:30 a.m.
From: Kristine M. Gebbie, National AIDS Policy Coordinator

*W. Bush
for KMG*

I. PURPOSE

In conjunction with other observances of World AIDS Day (this Wednesday, December 1st), you will meet with clergy and lay people from across the country who have been on the front lines of their faith communities' response to the AIDS crisis.

II. BACKGROUND

Public perception frequently equates religious response to HIV/AIDS with the *God's wrath; just punishment* school of thought. But the men and women you will meet with Monday morning--Evangelical and mainstream Protestant, Catholic, and Jewish--represent what has always been a substantive part of the response: *that we are all called to care compassionately for those who are suffering*. The participants have provided pastoral care and other service to a number of people with HIV/AIDS and their families. While they have experienced families and friends rejecting people because of homosexuality or drug use, they have also witnessed--or helped bring about--reconciliation. Those representing denominational networks have been galvanized by their experiences to seek to change their institutional hierarchies.

In preparation for the breakfast, invitees were asked to focus on the following:

- how have--and haven't--religious communities responded to the needs of people with HIV/AIDS for compassionate care; and how have religious leaders challenged individual believers to act in faith and service in their daily lives?
- how can faith communities complement government in providing leadership for the remainder of this century in halting the spread of HIV infection?

Those meeting with you are likely to ask for consistent and regular ethical/moral leadership from the White House that will challenge all people to respond to AIDS and HIV with knowledge and compassion rather than ignorance and hatred.

III. PARTICIPANTS

IV. PRESS PLAN

V. SEQUENCE OF EVENTS

VI. REMARKS

Talking points attached

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See Office of Public Liaison briefing paper.

TALKING POINTS FOR BREAKFAST WITH HIV/AIDS RELIGIOUS LEADERS

- I UNDERSTAND THAT FEAR -- OF REJECTION, OF EJECTION FROM SCHOOL, OR LOSS OF COMMUNITY -- STILL CAUSES MANY FAMILIES TO BE SECRETIVE IF THEY ARE DEALING WITH A LOVED ONE WITH AIDS. I GUESS THIS IS ESPECIALLY A PROBLEM IN RURAL AREAS, AND WONDER HOW YOU AND I CAN HELP BREAK DOWN THOSE WALLS OF ISOLATION.
- I KNOW THAT THE BLUNT TALK THAT'S NEEDED ABOUT SUBSTANCE ABUSE AND HUMAN SEXUALITY CAN BE DIFFICULT IF NOT IMPOSSIBLE FOR SOME CHURCHES OR SYNAGOGUES TO DEAL WITH -- BUT WE HAVE TO HAVE THE STRONGEST SUPPORT YOU CAN LEND IF WE'RE GOING TO SAVE THE LIVES OF OUR NEXT GENERATIONS. CAN YOU GIVE ME SOME HELP ON HOW KRISTINE GEBBIE AND I CAN BOTH SUPPORT AND CHALLENGE RELIGIOUS INSTITUTIONS TO DEAL WITH THE CRITICAL NEED FOR ACCURATE AND HONEST PREVENTION MESSAGES?
- I'VE HEARD FROM A LOT OF PEOPLE THAT MANY FOLKS WITH AIDS ARE AS AFRAID OF LOSING THEIR INSURANCE AS THEY ARE OF DYING -- MOSTLY BECAUSE THEY DON'T WANT TO BE A BURDEN ON THEIR FAMILIES OR FRIENDS. I HOPE YOU KNOW MY HEALTH REFORM PLAN WILL TAKE THAT FEAR AWAY -- AND WANT YOU TO HELP ME SPREAD THE WORD ABOUT THAT.
- WHAT KIND OF SUPPORT HAVE YOU GOTTEN FROM THE FEDERAL GOVERNMENT FOR YOUR WORK SO FAR, AND HOW DO YOU THINK WE CAN BEST SUPPORT THE WORK THAT YOU'RE DOING?
- I'LL BE VISITING WITH AIDS PATIENTS AND THEIR FAMILIES THIS WEDNESDAY, AND WILL BE SURE TO ASK ABOUT THE SUPPORT THEY'VE RECEIVED -- OR NOT RECEIVED -- FROM THEIR CHURCHES OR TEMPLES
- I'LL ALSO BE MAKING A BRIEF ADDRESS AFTER THAT VISIT, AND WILL BE SURE TO MENTION THIS MEETING AND MY CONVICTION THAT EVERY RELIGIOUS INSTITUTION, AND ALL FAITHFUL PEOPLE, HAVE A ROLE TO PLAY IN CARING COMPASSIONATELY FOR THOSE WHO ARE ILL; AND IN PROVIDING EDUCATION TO YOUNG PEOPLE WHICH WILL PREVENT INFECTION WITH HIV AND HELP SAVE LIVES
- I ASSURE YOU THAT I'LL BE KEEPING YOU AND YOUR VERY IMPORTANT MINISTRIES IN MY PRAYERS. AND I HOPE THAT YOU WILL EACH KEEP ME IN YOUR PRAYERS AS I WORK WITH KRISTINE TO ENSURE A MORE COMPREHENSIVE AND COMPASSIONATE RESPONSE TO ALL THOSE WHO HAVE HIV OR AIDS, AND THE BEST POSSIBLE EDUCATION FOR ALL OF OUR YOUNG PEOPLE WHICH WILL GIVE THEM THE ETHICAL AND EDUCATIONAL FOUNDATION THEY NEED TO MAKE LIFE-SAVING DECISIONS.

BIOGRAPHICAL NOTES FOR PARTICIPANTS

Monsignor Russell Dillard is from *St. Augustine's Roman Catholic Church* in Washington, D.C. (Henry Cisneros attends). St. Augustine's has an active AIDS ministry, and its Gospel Choir will be participating in the World AIDS Day event at the Department of Justice.

Reverend Ed Dobson is pastor of *Calvary Church* in Grand Rapids. While his church is evangelical, about four years ago he became concerned about HIV and AIDS when some acquaintances became ill. His subsequent work in his church and the larger community has been profiled in Christianity Today.

Rabbi Joseph Edelheit leads *Temple Israel* (Reform Congregation with 2,100 households) in Minneapolis. He is founding chair of the AIDS Pastoral Interfaith Network of Minneapolis/St. Paul and since 1989 has been Rabbinic Co-Chair of the Union of American Hebrew Congregations/Central Conference of American Rabbis Committee on AIDS. He has personally been the rabbi to over 20 people who have died from AIDS.

Reverend Trudy James founded and directs the *Regional AIDS Interfaith Network* in Little Rock. Beginning with a few committed individuals and congregations, she has built a full-service professionally run community-wide ministry involving large numbers of volunteers and churches.

Reverend Phil Jamison is co-moderator of the *Presbyterian AIDS Network* and pastor of Bethlehem Presbyterian Parish in Fredericktown, PA. He Chairs the Pittsburgh Presbytery Special Committee on AIDS, and has worked for three years as AIDS Specialist at a secular community organization specializing in mental health care for person with HIV/AIDS and their loved ones.

Reverend Ted Karpf is Executive Director of the *National Episcopal AIDS Coalition*. His parish in Dallas lost over one-third of its members when a person with AIDS was welcomed to worship in 1984, but became one of the fastest-growing parishes in the Diocese. He has proved pastoral care to over 200 people who have died from AIDS, and also served for three years in the US Public Health Service as the nation's first Regional AIDS Coordinator.

Jon A. Lacey is a layman from East Lansing, MI who as a volunteer coordinates the *Disciples of Christ AIDS Network*. He works professionally for the federally-funded AIDS Education and Training Center (AETC) at the University of Michigan.

Rev. Bill McGill is founder and pastor of *Fellowship of Faith Baptist Church* in Des Moines, and founder of the P.E.A.C.E. (People Educated About AIDS Creates Empathy) program to provide HIV/AIDS outreach, education and services to communities of color. He is Vice President of the Iowa/Nebraska State Conference of the NAACP.

Bishop Fritz Mutti (pronounced Mew-ti) was elected a *Bishop of the United Methodist Church* for Topeka, Kansas earlier this year. He has lost two gay sons to AIDS, and has been an impassioned and prophetic voice in the Methodist Church for loving acceptance of all people and care for those who are ill. (Bishop Mutti is being hosted in Washington by Rev. and Mrs. Waggeman of Foundry United Methodist Church, where the President and Mrs. Clinton have frequently worshipped.)

Reverend Altagracia Perez of Chicago has been engaged in AIDS care and advocacy at the parish, Diocesan, and national levels. She is currently translating the "Youth in the Age of AIDS" educational curriculum of the *Episcopal Church* into Spanish. (additional information being FAXed directly to Flo)

Reverend A. Stephen Pieters (Steve) of Los Angeles, has been diagnosed with AIDS for over ten years and is the Field Director for AIDS Ministry of the *Universal Fellowship of Metropolitan Community Churches*. He serves on the Boards of Directors of the AIDS National Interfaith Network, the AIDS Interfaith Council of Southern California, and others.

Reverend Michael Pozar is pastor of Holy Cross Lutheran Church in Pacifica, CA and coordinator of the *Lutheran AIDS Network (LANET)*. In his parish he has provided pastoral care to a number of people with HIV and AIDS, and was instrumental in establishing LANET at the denominational level.

Reverend Pernessa Seele is executive director of *Balm in Gilead, Inc.* which provides multiple services to people with HIV/AIDS and also sponsors the annual *Harlem Day of Prayer for the End of AIDS*. She has made great strides in challenging Black churches to respond to the crisis in their community, and was recently a recipient of the "Choose Life" award presented by the Black Leadership Commission on AIDS.

MISSING: I don't have information on anyone from the Salvation Army or from Rich Cizik from the National Association of Evangelicals.