

## AIDS Survivor Speaks Here

By Gene Skidmore  
Special to Q-Notes

On October 8, MCC Charlotte was honored to have the Rev. Steve Pieters as its guest speaker. Rev. Pieters is a long term survivor of AIDS, and in 1982, was one of the first people to be diagnosed with the disease. Not only is he still alive today, but he is in perfect health.

Originally an MCC minister in the Los Angeles area, he now spends the majority of his time traveling around the country sharing his incredible story with those who will listen.

When Rev. Pieters was first diagnosed with AIDS, not much was known about the disease, and people were often fearful even to be near him. He immediately began taking treatments from experimental drugs which were potentially dangerous. During the course of the next four years, Steve became ill with everything from cancer of the lymph nodes to Kaposi's sarcoma. He was even blind for a month due to a severe inflammation of the eyes.

His doctors lost him in an emergency room at one point, then revived him.

Steve then became resigned to the fact that dying was inevitable, and he began to anticipate it. But as time passed, his health began to improve. By 1986, the cancers had totally disappeared, along with every other ailment he had ever suffered, and he hasn't been sick since then!

Rev. Pieters is living proof that not everyone who is diagnosed with AIDS will be dead in two to three years, like many people think.

According to Rev. Pieters, there are several things that a person who is HIV positive can do to improve his chances of long term survival. During his conversion from sickness to health, Steve educated himself on good nutrition and the proper use of vitamins. He also gets a sufficient amount of rest.

Steve recalls that a doctor once told him that any form of exercise would bring about a breakdown of his neuromuscular system. Determined that he wanted to be healthy and active, he got involved in an exercise program and is still active in it today.

Steve also believes that laughter is an important form of therapy for the soul. He remembers that on the night of his diagnosis he got together with friends and watched the "Vitameatavegamin" episode of "I Love Lucy."

But first and foremost, Steve gives credit to God for his recovery. His statement to the world is that God is still in the healing business; it's not just something He did two thousand years ago and stopped. Steve Pieters is living proof of this. God wants us to be fully alive, and instruments of His love. It has been estimated that 15% of all AIDS patients will be long term survivors. Who is to say who will or will not be among them?

However, Steve is still HIV positive and people often tell him, "You could become ill again tomorrow. Aren't you creating false hopes?" Steve's reply to this is: "What is better - false hope or false despair? None of us are promised a tomorrow. Today I am well. Live Today."

Rev. Pieters said, finally, that death is something that, at one time or another, we will all have to face. But we should face death with faith and certainty that nothing, not even AIDS, can or will separate us from the love of Christ.

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