

Saddleback Church Kicks Off Effort to Get to Zero Orphans in Rwanda on World AIDS Day

In honor of World AIDS Day on Dec. 1, **Saddleback Church** is setting its own goal of reaching zero orphans throughout Rwanda by 2015. The target is supplemental to UNAIDS' three-year strategy of "Getting to Zero," including zero babies born of HIV, zero AIDS-related deaths, zero new HIV infections and zero stigma and discrimination.

"This is a very audacious goal—to help a country be the first to empty their orphanages, helping 3,000 children become part of permanent families, but we know with God all things are possible," says Kay Warren, founder of Saddleback Church's HIV&AIDS Initiative. "The church has the largest participation, widest distribution, simplest administration, fastest proliferation, longest continuation, strongest authorization and highest motivation to help with this health crisis. For that reason, the local church is key to getting to zero."

Believing the worldwide church can be a solution to the HIV and AIDS pandemic, **Saddleback** is hosting Compassion Weekend Dec. 1-2 to bring awareness to the need for the church to respond by caring for those infected and affected, including orphans, around the globe.

Warren will speak a message of encouragement and challenge during each of Saddleback's weekend services and will be joined by 13-year-old Cynthia Styffe, a former orphan from Kigali, Rwanda, who was adopted four years ago by a member family of Saddleback; Timothy Brown, the first individual cured of HIV; and a discordant couple that decided to not let the strain of an HIV diagnosis tear their family apart. Each service will be available to watch live online via Saddleback's Internet Campus at .

In 2002, Warren became, in her words, “seriously disturbed” by the suffering of the millions infected with or affected by HIV&AIDS. She was instrumental in presenting Saddleback Church’s first HIV&AIDS conference in 2005 and launching the HIV&AIDS Initiative, which is designed to equip pastors and church leaders to begin or strengthen existing HIV and AIDS ministries in their church and to encourage those living with HIV and AIDS with practical information from a spiritual point of view. The church has since also founded the Saddleback Orphan Care ministry.

“The HIV&AIDS Initiative at Saddleback was born out of the conviction that God cares about sick people—He loves people who are living with HIV,” explains Warren. “A study of Scripture reveals a God who is passionate about the sick. If we link arms together, united in vision and purpose, we can bring healing and hope to millions of people living with HIV and AIDS as well as their families and friends. In fact, we can do even more than that: We can end AIDS.”