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**Rev. Al Sharpton**  
National Action Network

*Members*

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New York, N.Y.  
Canaan Baptist Church

**Rev. David Jefferson**  
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Metropolitan Baptist Church

**Rev. Horace Sheffield**  
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**Rev. Frank D. Tucker**  
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First Baptist Church

**Rev. Raphael Warnock**  
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United Way  
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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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**Group of Nation's Most Renowned Black Clergy Led by  
Rev. Sharpton and Rev. Butts Launch Nationwide Testing  
Campaign to Fight COVID-19 in the Black Community**

First testing event to kick off the Choose Healthy Life Action Plan, which will serve five major U.S. cities, took place yesterday at the historic Abyssinian Baptist Church in Harlem, N.Y.

United Way of New York City leads implementation efforts for the Action Plan which includes over 50 participating churches across the cities of New York, Detroit, Atlanta, Newark and Washington D.C.

**NEW YORK – Jan. 26, 2020:** A group of the nation's leading Black clergy led by Rev. Al Sharpton and Rev. Calvin O. Butts, III kicked off its nationwide Choose Healthy Life (CHL) initiative yesterday to address health disparities in the Black community through the Black Church by hosting its first COVID-19 testing event at historic Abyssinian Baptist Church in Harlem, N.Y. The Choose Healthy Life Action Plan will provide services including COVID-19 testing, vaccine awareness and preventative health education through 50 churches across five cities in a historic partnership with United Way of New York City, Quest Diagnostics and America's leading public health experts.

"It is critical that we remain vigilant in 2021 as COVID-19 continues to decimate our Black community. As faith leaders, we are stepping up to provide critical testing and resources to help our communities fight back against the virus," **said Rev. Sharpton, who was tested at yesterday's event** to demonstrate the growing importance and ease of testing, even as vaccines begin to be available.

[High resolution images and b-roll from yesterday's event are available at <https://newsroom.questdiagnostics.com/digital-assets>]

Working in collaboration with implementation partner United Way of New York City and affiliated local agencies, the Action Plan is launching in five cities – New York, N.Y., Newark, N.J., Detroit, Mich., Atlanta, Ga. and Washington, D.C. In addition to holding testing events, the Action Plan is also placing a Black church public health navigator at each of the 50 inaugural churches across the country.

The Black church public health navigators are guiding community members through the testing process and serve as a resource for questions related to testing, vaccinations and more. They are also making sure that individuals receive the critical care that they need depending on individual circumstances, such as connecting them to the required social services or providing access to food or childcare.

Testing events kicked off yesterday at Abyssinian Baptist Church in New York City while testing events for the launch of the Choose Healthy Life Action Plan in other cities will be taking place in February. **A list of participating churches can be found at the end of this release.**

“The Black community has been disproportionately devastated by COVID-19, and faith leaders are stepping up to bring much-needed testing and prevention education to our neighborhoods. The Black church is among the most trusted institutions in our communities and has historically risen to the occasion when our communities are in need. Through Choose Healthy Life, we are doing so once again to address the COVID-19 pandemic and health disparities in our communities,” **said Rev. Butts.**

As the vaccine is slowly rolled out across the United States, there remains a need for robust COVID-19 testing in the Black community. **Dr. Marcella Nunez-Smith**, the Chair of the COVID-19 Health Equity Task Force for the Biden-Harris administration, spoke at the recent CHL Black Clergy Conclave last week about the importance of continued testing.

“Too many Black Americans tragically get their first test for COVID-19 only when being admitted to the hospital, having missed the critical early window when some of the best treatments are most effective,” said Dr. Nunez-Smith at the conclave. Testing is also key to fighting COVID-19 because of the alarming rate of asymptomatic spread. According to a recent study by CDC researchers, [nearly 60% of COVID-19 cases stem from asymptomatic individuals](#). The program aims to expand to additional cities throughout the year and also to expand its scope to address broad racial health disparities.

Last week, on Martin Luther King, Jr. Day, Choose Healthy Life hosted a [Conclave](#) of 100+ Black clergy, America’s leading public health officials, including **Dr. Anthony Fauci** and Dr. Nunez-Smith, and nonprofit and corporate leaders, like United Way of New York City and Quest Diagnostics, for panels and Q&As on COVID-19 in the Black community. The Conclave also briefed leaders on the Choose Healthy Life Action Plan’s sustainable, scalable and transferable approach to address health disparities in the Black community.

“United Way of New York City is proud to be working together with Choose Healthy Life, leveraging our expertise in convening and mobilizing the best of the nonprofit, corporate and public health sectors to provide needed COVID-19 testing to communities of color in five major cities across the United States,” **said Sheena Wright, President and CEO of United Way of New York City.**

“Testing will continue to play an essential role in diagnosing COVID-19 and helping to prevent its continued spread,” **said Steve Rusckowski, Chief Executive Officer and President of Quest Diagnostics, founding sponsor of Choose Healthy Life.** “Our work with our partners Choose Healthy Life and the United Way of New York City to save lives and stop the disproportionate devastation COVID-19 is wreaking on the Black community is both urgent and necessary. Quest is focused on taking action to address health inequities across our country.”

The Action Plan is being led by the Choose Healthy Life National Black Clergy Health Leadership Council, which is co-chaired by Rev. Sharpton (National Action Network, New York, N.Y.) and Rev. Butts (Abyssinian Baptist Church, New York, N.Y.) and includes council members Rev. David Jefferson (Metropolitan Baptist Church, Newark, N.J.); Rev. Jacques DeGraff (Canaan Baptist

Church of Christ, New York, N.Y.); Rev. Horace Sheffield (New Destiny Christian Fellowship, Detroit, Mich.); Rev. Frank Tucker (First Baptist Church, Washington D.C.); and U.S. Senator Rev. Raphael Warnock (Ebenezer Baptist Church, Atlanta, Ga.). The Council has among its medical advisors Dr. Louis Sullivan, former U.S. Secretary of Health and Human Services; Dr. Tom Frieden, former CDC Director under President Obama and President and CEO of Resolve to Save Lives, an initiative of Vital Strategies; and former U.S. Congresswoman Dr. Donna Christensen.

The successful model behind the Choose Healthy Life Black Clergy Action Plan was initially created and developed by Debra Fraser-Howze, founder of the National Black Leadership Commission on AIDS, to successfully combat the HIV/AIDS epidemic in the Black community.

“The Black church is the most influential institution in the Black community, and it is stepping up to help solve a public health crisis, as it has done before in the past. The Choose Healthy Life Action Plan enables the faith and scientific communities to unite and provide much-needed resources to the Black community,” said **Debra Fraser-Howze, founder of the Choose Healthy Life Black Clergy Action Plan and advisor to two U.S. Presidents on HIV and AIDS from 1998 to 2003.**

Funding support for Choose Healthy Life has been made possible through grants from founding sponsors, Quest Diagnostics (NYSE: DGX), the Quest Diagnostics Foundation and Resolve to Save Lives, an initiative of Vital Strategies.

### **Choose Healthy Life Churches by City:**

#### New York City

Abyssinian Baptist Church (Harlem)  
Canaan Baptist Church of Christ (Harlem)  
Cornerstone Baptist Church (Bedford-Stuyvesant)  
Faith @ Work Christian Church (Bronx)  
First Central Baptist Church (Staten Island)  
God’s Battalion of Prayer (Queens)  
Greater Allen A.M.E. Cathedral of New York (Queens)  
St. Paul Community Baptist Church (East New York, Brooklyn)  
Thessalonians Worship Center (Bronx)  
Walker Memorial Baptist Church (Bronx)

#### Newark

Metropolitan Baptist Church  
Bethany Baptist Church  
City Hope Ministries  
Greater Mt. Moriah Baptist Church  
Jehovah-Jireh Praise and Worship Church Center  
Mt. Calvary Missionary Baptist Church  
Peace Temple Church of God in Christ  
Pilgrim Baptist Church  
Pleasant Grove Baptist Church  
St. Marks Free Will Baptist Church

#### Washington, D.C.

First Baptist Church (Randolph)  
Community of Hope AME Church  
Covenant Baptist United Church of Christ  
First Baptist Church of Highland Park

Kingdom Fellowship AME Church  
Leadership Council for Healthy Communities (LCHC)  
Michigan Park Christian Church  
Mt. Lebanon Baptist  
Mt. Sinai Baptist Church  
The Pennsylvania Avenue Baptist Church  
Pilgrim Rest Baptist Church

Detroit

New Destiny Christian Fellowship  
Fellowship Chapel  
Greater Grace Temple  
Greater Pentecostal Temple  
Greater St. Mark  
Historic King Solomon  
Perfecting Church  
Saunders Memorial Allen Temple AME  
Second Ebenezer Baptist Church  
Third New Hope Baptist Church

Atlanta

Ebenezer Baptist Church  
Atlanta Masjid of Al-Islam  
Christian Fellowship Baptist Church  
Debre Birsate Gabriel Ethiopian Orthodox Tewahedo Church  
First Iconium Baptist Church  
Impact Church  
Midway Missionary Baptist Church  
Mt. Olive Baptist Church  
St. Peter & Paul Catholic Church  
Zion Hill Baptist Church

*To learn more about Choose Healthy Life, please click [here](#).*

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