

## Faith-Based Letter/Sermon



To my congregation:

We talk about Kwanzaa and it being an ideal time to reflect on its principles of unity, self-determination, collective work and responsibility, cooperative economics, purpose, creativity and faith. We take this time of year to visit with family, share traditions, and celebrate precious life.

Unfortunately, there are others who put their lives and our lives at risk. You know who I'm talking about. I'm talking about the man, woman or teenager who believes that the only way to celebrate and have a good time is to drink to excess and/or use illegal drugs and then get behind the wheel of a motor vehicle. I'm also talking about the person who sees this happening but does nothing to try to stop it. The person who gets behind the wheel is putting our lives and our families and friends' lives at risk. The person who says nothing or doesn't try to stop them is an accomplice.

In 2005 someone died in an alcohol-related crash every 31 minutes. That's 16,865 people in one year. Additionally, more than 250,000 people were injured in alcohol-related crashes – someone every two minutes. As for our young people, alcohol use contributes to the three leading causes of death among African-American 12- to 20-year-olds: homicide, unintentional injuries (including car crashes), and suicide. In 2006, it's time to stop impaired driving.

We should also know that NHTSA's new *Drunk Driving. Over the Limit. Under Arrest.* campaign means that drivers who are caught driving while impaired or allowing another to do so can be arrested, have their licenses revoked, have their insurance rates increased, or be given hefty fines. According to the Centers for Disease Control, in 2004, more than 1.4 million drivers were arrested for driving under the influence of alcohol or narcotics. This is an arrest rate of 1 for every 139 licensed drivers in the United States.

Driving while impaired or allowing another to do so can result in tragic consequences, so remember the Kwanzaa principle of "Umoja" that reminds African-Americans to strive for and maintain unity in the family, community, nation and race. Let's define ourselves as positive, safe and healthy. Alcohol-related crashes destroy families and that destroys our communities, so embrace the principle of "Collective Work and Responsibility" that makes us responsible for each other.

Celebrate, but please do it safely.

Sincerely,