

# WHAT FAITH GROUPS SAY ABOUT JUSTICE AND HEALTH CARE



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**How will we  
address the growing  
number of families  
and individuals  
without affordable  
and accessible  
health care?**

*Faithful Citizenship  
U.S. Catholic Bishops*

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## ROMAN CATHOLIC

Every person has the right to adequate health care. This right flows from the sanctity of human life and the dignity that belongs to all persons, who are made in the image of God... Our call for health care reform is rooted in the biblical call to heal the sick and to serve 'the least of these,' the priorities of justice and the principle of the common good. The existing patterns of health care in the United States do not meet the minimal standard of social justice and the common good. *[Resolution on Health Care Reform, U.S. Catholic Bishops [1993]*

The obligation to provide justice for all means that the poor have the single most urgent economic claim on the conscience of the nation. To see a loved one sick is bad enough, but to have no possibility of obtaining health care is worse. . . .this is something no one should have to endure in a country as rich as ours. *[86. Pastoral Letter on Catholic Social Teaching and the U.S. Economy U. S. Catholic Bishops, 1986]*

Affordable and accessible health care is an essential safeguard of human life, a fundamental human right, and an urgent national priority. We need to reform the nation's health care system, and this reform must be rooted in values that respect human dignity, protect human life, and meet the needs of the poor and uninsured. With tens of millions of Americans lacking basic health insurance, we support measures to ensure that decent health care is available to all as a moral imperative. *[Faithful Citizenship: A Catholic Call to Political Responsibility, U.S. Catholic Bishops 1999]*

## PROTESTANT

### Presbyterian

The Church supports the right of every person to have access to quality health care that is adequate, affordable, and accountable. The private and public sectors and voluntary organizations, individually and cooperatively, should work to that end. . . . The Church urges Congregations to engage in advocacy and work towards just and equitable public policy on health care affecting a cross section of the population. *[The 211<sup>th</sup> General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) Statements (1999)]*

The health of a society is measured by the quality of its concern and care for the health of its people. How provision is made for children in the dawn of life, the elderly in the twilight of life, and the sick, needy, and those with disabling conditions in the shadow of life are clear indices of the moral character and commitment of a nation . . . . *["Life Abundant: Values, Choices, and Health Care: The Responsibility and Role of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.)" 1988 General Assembly]*

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**Do not stand idly by  
the blood of your neighbor**

*Leviticus 19:16*

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### American Friends Committee

. . . All persons have right to live in dignity, and (that) our society should order itself and its resources to assure the exercise of this basic right. Health care is one important resource for the preservation of life and dignity. *[Fiends Committee on National Legislation, Statement on Health Care Reform, February 23, 1994]*



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**We must  
diligently  
preserve the  
nature of  
health care as a  
shared endeavor.**

*Division of Church & Society  
Lutheran [ELCA]*

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### **Lutheran (ELCA)**

Health care in the United States . . . suffers from a prolonged crisis. Rising health care costs leave a growing number of people without adequate health care. Health care resources often are rationed based on ability to pay rather than need. Finding access to quality health care services is difficult for many. Fear and self-interest defeat social justice in the political processes of health care reform . . . we must diligently preserve the nature of health care as a shared endeavor

Justice requires giving to each person his or her due. Health care is the kind of good most appropriately given on the basis of need. Too often, however, health care is distributed on the basis of merit, social worth or contribution, marketplace value, or ability to pay. [Evangelical Lutheran Church of America, *Division for Church in Society*, 1991]

### **Church of Christ**

The current availability of health care to all people in the United States has been drastically reduced by changes in the private sector organization, financing and delivery of health care and in state and federal health financing policies. The direct result of these changes is that more than 44 million Americans have no health care insurance coverage. Perhaps more than a hundred million people experience serious barriers to access and a working majority of Americans probably now feel vulnerably underinsured.

This poses a grave threat to the people who most need access to health care and who are most at-risk, underserved or ill-served, women and children in poverty and working families; also reflecting glaring disparities of health status and health care access according to racial-ethnic minority and socio-economic status That make [health care] a central issue of civil rights. [National Council of the Churches of Christ in the USA, *Renewed Faith Community Universal Health Care Campaign*, Nov. 1999]

### **Episcopal**

The 70th general Convention asserts the right of all individuals to medically necessary health care, including long-term services; and . . . the Episcopal Church is encouraged at all levels to advocate for legislation for comprehensive medical benefits.

All persons, including children, low income working unemployed and under-employed, uninsured and underinsured, and persons with physical or mental disabilities and chronic conditions should have access to health care, including long term care, regardless of their ability to pay. [Episcopal Church, USA, *General Convention (A010) and (A099) Resolution, Right of all Individuals to Comprehensive Health Care*"]

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**He gave them  
authority . . .  
to heal every disease  
and every infirmity.**

*Matthew 10:11*

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### **American Baptist Church**

Presently, the United States has a health care system that is in crisis. . . Many people do not have health insurance and therefore go without basic health care. They see physicians less often and die younger than those with insurance. Even people with apparently good health insurance coverage have hidden vulnerabilities when faced with payments for expensive medical conditions.

. . . In accordance with our 1975 Policy Statement on Health Care, we believe that health care should be viewed as a right, not a privilege, and that the basic goal for health care reform should be universal access to comprehensive benefits. [American Baptist *Resolution on Health Care for All*, General Board of the American Baptist Churches, June 1992]

## **Mennonite**

The Mennonite Central Committee U.S. has been advocating for a health care system that reflects Biblical values such as sacredness of life, community, wholeness, stewardship and justice. In our pursuit of these values we review legislation for its affect on the poorest and most marginalized people.

For a health care reform bill to garner the support of the MCC Washington Office, it must remedy the most pressing failure of the current system – its inability to provide adequate health care for millions of Americans. [Mennonite Central Committee, Washington, "Position on Health Care Reform", Feb. 1994]

## **United Methodist**

Health is a condition of physical, mental, social, and spiritual well-being, and we view it as a public and private responsibility. Health care is a basic human right. Psalm 146 speaks of the God "who executes justice for the oppressed; who gives food to the hungry. The LORD sets the prisoners free; the LORD opens the eyes of the blind." It is unjust to construct or perpetuate barriers to physical wholeness or full participation in community.

. . .We also recognize the role of governments in ensuring that each individual has access to those elements necessary to good health. [*The Book of Discipline of The United Methodist Church* Copyright 2000 by The United Methodist Publishing House.]

Taking the Gospel mandates seriously, United Methodists are called to work toward a healthy society of whole persons. Part of our task is to enable people to care for themselves and to take responsibility for their own health. Another part of our task is to ensure that people who are ill, whether from illness of spirit, mind, or body, are not turned aside or ignored but given care that allows them to live a full life [*Book of Resolutions*. #96 Health and Wholeness. United Methodist Church, 2000]

## **Church of the Brethren**

Throughout the Scriptures, God calls for justice and fairness for all people. Therefore, it seems particularly clear that in the richest nation on earth, God expects access to adequate health care to be a basic right for all citizens, regardless of gender, race or financial status. While good health cannot be assured to everyone, good health care can and should be guaranteed. [*Church of the Brethren Annual Conference: Statement on Health Care in the United States (1989)*]

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**What does the Lord  
require of you but**

**to do justice, love kindness,  
and walk humbly  
with your God?**

Micah 6:8

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## **UNITARIAN UNIVERSALIST**

*WHEREAS* access to adequate health care in the United States is neither equitable nor compassionate . . . *WHEREAS* 13% [now 20%] of the population have no health-care coverage, and increasing numbers cannot buy individual medical insurance at any price; . . .

*WHEREAS* Medicaid and Medicare do not adequately address the needs of the elderly, disabled, blind, or the poor; . . .

*BE IT RESOLVED* that the Unitarian Universalist Association express its moral indignation at the above conditions and affirm that comprehensive health care is a basic human right and demand the development of a system which guarantees quality health care to every individual in the United States. [Unitarian Universalist Association, A National Health Plan, 1994 General Resolution]



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**Of all forms  
of inequality,  
injustice in  
health care is the  
most shocking  
and inhumane.**

Rev. Dr. Martin  
Luther King, Jr

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**A person whose  
passions respond  
only to his or her  
personal needs...  
has long abandoned  
the true purpose of  
life...**

[Ayah 15:3 Holy Qur'an]

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## JEWISH

...WHEREAS the high cost and restricted access to adequate health care in the United States have virtually eliminated a significant and growing percentage of Americans from the crucial benefits of adequate health care, and serious gaps in coverage are appearing even for those Americans who are insured;

...BE IT RESOLVED that the United Synagogue of Conservative Judaism urges Congress and the Administration to develop a comprehensive national health care plan that ensures adequate coverage for all Americans [National Health Care (Leadership Council of Conservative Judaism, 1992)]

To be without health insurance in this country means to be without access to medical care. But health is not a luxury, nor should it be the sole possession of a privileged few. We are all created *be'zelem Elohim* -in the Image of God- and this makes every human life as precious as the next. By 'pricing out' a portion of this country's populations from health care coverage, we mock the image of God and destroy the vessels of God's work. [Union of American Hebrew Congregations, Rabbi Alexander Schindler, (Past President)(1992)]

Two central ideas underlie the abiding Jewish commitment to provide health care to all of God's children. The first is Judaism's teaching that an individual human life is of infinite value and that the preservation of life supersedes almost all other consideration. We are constantly commanded not to stand idly by the "blood of our neighbors". The second is the belief that God has endowed us with the understanding and ability to become partners with God in making a better world. [Reform of the health care system, Union of American Hebrew Congregations, General Assembly — October 1993]

## MUSLIM

We believe that health is a fundamental human right which has as its prerequisites social justice and equality and that it should be equally available and accessible to all.

[Imam Sa'dullah Khan, The Islamic Center of Southern California]

Delayed healthcare or the lack of it can lead to problems that devastate the lives of individuals and families. These problems, whether they be expensive treatment, terminal illness or loss of productivity, ultimately become the liability of us all. Allowing millions. . . to live without healthcare means gambling with the future of our children. [Imam Ahmed Nezar Kobeisy, Islamic Society of Central New York, Chaplain Syracuse University]

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**We sent aforetime our apostles with  
clear signs and sent down with them  
the Book and the Balance (of Right  
and Wrong) that they may stand  
forth in Justice.**

[Ayah 57:25 Holy Qur'an]

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It is hard to imagine a person who claims to be just, merciful and kind who, after becoming aware of the injustice, humiliation and suffering of millions who live without health coverage, does not work to change such conditions to alleviate such sufferings. [Imam Ahmed Nezar Kobeisy, Islamic Society of Central New York, Chaplain Syracuse University]