

Article for the CDT for August 09
By the Rev. Dr. Diane L. Prosser

Healthcare reform is in the air, and rightfully so. Just from a strictly pragmatic perspective, we as a nation can no longer afford the kind of healthcare we presently have. In the year 2007 alone, Americans spent \$2.2 trillion dollars on healthcare, or \$7,421 per person – nearly twice the average of other developed nations. And the cost is escalating at a rate much higher than the increase of wages.

During that same year, more than 7 million adults between the ages of 50 and 64 were uninsured (and millions more people in other age groups). So we have rising health care costs with fewer people having access. We desperately need a solution!

What is the role of the church in helping to make this happen? Obviously, this is not just a fiscal problem, but a moral one as well. Many people are being hurt by this situation, with the poor, the employed, the underemployed, and the marginalized hurt most of all. The test of a “just” nation, said the prophets of Israel, is how it treats its weakest members.

From Micah 6:8, *“what does the Lord require of you but to do justice, to love kindness, and to walk humbly with your God.”*

From Amos 5:24, *“but let justice roll down like waters, and righteousness like an ever-flowing stream.”*

Reflecting on these texts (and others from the Bible), many Christians and other people of faith have put forth visions of healthcare that are inclusive, accessible, affordable, and accountable.

Inclusive means that each person deserves to be treated with dignity.

Affordable means that our healthcare resources need to be administered efficiently and distributed with equity.

Accessible means that people should have access to health services that provide basic and necessary care acknowledging the limitations of our shared resources.

Accountable means that governments, businesses, and faith communities are called to work in partnership for a healthcare system that ensures the best possible care for its people.

Recently I came across a prayer which reflects these values. May this be a prayer on many lips as we encourage our legislators in the days and weeks to come:

God of life, we pray this day for those whose dying is hastened by lack of access to healthcare. May this be a motivation for change.

God of love, we pray this day for the millions of people in our land who do not have healthcare coverage, that their pain and anxiety will be relieved and that our hearts will be moved to help them.

God of justice, we pray this day that our nation will work as one to see that all people in our land have the healthcare they need.

God of the weak, we pray this day for those who are too young, too sick, or too discouraged to speak out for themselves. May we be voices for them.

God of power, we pray that all who are in positions of leadership will work together to solve the problem of people living without good healthcare.

God of all, you have made us in your image. Help us to reflect your goodness. Amen.

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