

HEALTH CARE POLICY STATEMENT
Prologue: Health and Wholeness

Health and healing are central dimensions of the faith we profess. Our Christian heritage teaches us to be concerned for the whole person. We believe that God's purpose is for all people to be recognized as of worth, and; therefore, to be healthy, and to nurture health for one another in community. We are made in God's image and have value, dignity, and integrity in healthful community.

A basic theme in Scripture is the intelligent, committed and compassionate stewardship of life as we live in community with one another. Hebrew and Christian scriptures reflect the covenant between God and people in this stewardship of creation and community. Health and healing were central in the work of Jesus and the early church. The Gospel of Mark demonstrates Jesus' concern for the total well-being of those he met. Lepers and "mad men," outcasts and Samaritans, women and children were restored to health and effective life. The Greek word, *sodzo*, is translated as "to save", is the same word translated "to heal," and "to make whole." The terms health and holy share a common origin--akin to whole, sound, hale and well. Their relationship in Christian history is exemplified in the life and work of Jesus who went about all Galilee teaching in their synagogues, preaching the gospel of the Kingdom and healing every disease and infirmity among the people.

Because all people have been created in the image of God and are called to abundant life, we are called to a ministry of health and wholeness. All aspects of health were of equal concern to Christ who reached out to mend body, mind and spirit to restore wholeness and renewed communion with God and neighbor. Thus, our ministry of healing must attend to physical and emotional needs as well as spiritual needs.

Religious communities have a long tradition of concern for health and wholeness, including their work with others to provide direct health care services. Now we are called to a new level of involvement in health ministry. We must reclaim the promise of God's gifts of wholeness for all people and work in new ways given the current crisis in health and health care in our state and nation. We are called to be instruments of God's creative, redemptive activity intended to bring health and wholeness to all. As a prophetic community, we must seek a society where all have access to life-giving resources, including health care required to return to wholeness.

"We the people of the United States" are confronted by a growing crisis in health care. As communities of faith, we are called to action in the face of such a challenge. While the United States spends more per person on health care than any other nation in the world, growing numbers of people cannot afford simple basic health care, let alone respond to catastrophic and chronic health needs. More than 13 million live in poverty in the United States, two out of three are completely without medical insurance. Over 15 percent of our population have no form of health care coverage, 37 million at any one time. In addition, 65 million are under-insured, exposed to out-of-pocket expenses which threaten family economic survival. In Kentucky, 19.9% of the population is living in poverty, 25 % or 1 of 4 children live below the poverty level and 350,000 Kentuckians, about 1/2 of them employed, do not have health insurance and 23.2% of Kentucky's children are not covered by health insurance. Health care spending is the leading cause of personal bankruptcies in the United States. The accelerating AIDS crisis is straining health providers to the breaking point. American business is disadvantaged in the world market because of high health care costs.

A broadly shared concern for justice compels us to encourage new health care financing and coordination of delivery systems which better meet the need of all people. Market strategies that serve only those able to pay are consistent with neither our religious principles nor our understanding of commonwealth, as defined in the United States Constitution. Health care for all is ultimately a result of the basic principle of Justice for all, which must be the foundation upon which all attempts at reform are based.

THEREFORE, we seek a state and national health care system that:

- serves everyone living in the Commonwealth of Kentucky and the United States;
- provides for the whole population of the state and the nation comprehensive benefits, including: preventative services and health promotion, primary and acute care, mental health care, and extended care, dental and vision care;
- draws financial support from the broadest resource base;
- guarantees access to care everywhere in this Commonwealth and the nation;
- sets prospective budgets for payment to health care institutions from state and federal funds in a way that assures services;
- is sensitive to the needs of persons working in the various components of the health care system;
- provides quality services and payment processes based on principles of equity and efficiency and cost effectiveness;
- sets a state and national budget for health education and wellness promotion;
- promotes effective and safe innovation and research in medical techniques, research on the delivery of health services, and research on health practices of individuals and families;
- reduces the burden of malpractice litigation;
- significantly reduces the current rapid inflation in the costs of providing health care services;
- provides leadership in health promotion by assessing the health impacts of standard of living issues, housing, nutrition, physical fitness, environmental safety, and sanitation.