



General Board of Church and Society of the United Methodist Church

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 To take action or join a network: www.umc-gbcs.org

The Bible and Health Advocacy: Ancient Vision, Modern Imperative

Theological Grounding	<i>Abundance</i>	<i>Community</i>	<i>Humanity</i>	<i>Stewardship</i>
<i>Biblical Illustration/ Scriptural Grounding</i>	<u>John 10:10</u> I came that you might have life and have it abundantly.	<u>Galatians 6:2,5</u> For all must carry their own loads...bear one another's burdens, and in this way you will fulfill the law of Christ.	<u>Genesis 1:27</u> - So God created humankind in his image, in the image of God he created them. <u>Ephesians 6:12</u> For our struggle is not against enemies of blood and flesh, but against the rulers, against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly places	<u>Psalms 95:5</u> The sea belongs to God who made it and the dry land, because God formed it. <u>Luke 12:48b</u> From everyone to whom much has been given, much will be required. <u>Ezekiel 34:4</u> rulers have not healed the sick
<i>Moral Test: Does this policy:</i>	...promote God's intention of abundance for all human beings?	...promote God's intention for community?	...promote the dignity of those created in the image of God?	...call on our role as stewards of what God owns?
<i>Competing Societal Concept</i>	Contrived Scarcity	Social Responsibility	Dominance by Corporate Interests over Humanity	Unchecked Greed
<i>Health Care Issues Impacted</i>	Access to Care Escalating Costs Health Disparities	Medicare/Medicaid Escalating Costs which depress GNP and economy forcing companies to look for cheaper and less costly labor in other countries.	Pharmaceuticals Escalating Costs Higher prices for the uninsured than for those who are insured	Health care financing Escalating Costs Medical "Savings Accounts" or tax credits which create limited benefit for some but not all Americans but doesn't solve the overall problem.
<i>How the Biblical and Theological intent is thwarted</i>	Health care made into a commodity to be bought and sold; Unwillingness to make access available to all	Social Responsibility called a "beast" that must be starved: Threat to Medicaid and Medicare	Legislative support for corporate greed or bailout (government not permitted to negotiate drug prices.); assumption that benefits will "trickle down" Government seen as not necessary to regulate imbalance but necessary to bailout troubled companies.	Promotion of "ownership" in a fashion that penalizes those who are unable to manage "ownership" Opposition to a "systems" perspective on health reform which would make health care equitable, fair, less costly and more easily accessible.
<i>Symptoms: How to tell we are failing the test</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • High health care costs without covering everyone; • over 45.7 million uninsured • Racial Ethnic disparities • Waste, inefficiencies • Excess sickness & death 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Conversion of Non-Profits to For-Profits; • Reduction of Medicaid funding • Means-testing Medicare/Medicaid • Increasing pressure on the poor and the sick to fend for themselves. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Corporate Power; • Undue deference to corporations; • Deregulation • High prices whenever one provider has sole control of a good or service -- drugs, hospital care, etc. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Decisions made from a "business model" where profit is the criterion for success and the rewards go to the "owners". • Failure of Government to provide health care: <i>Ezekiel 34:4 -- rulers have not healed the sick</i>
<i>How can God's intention be lived out in health care reform today?</i>	ACCESSIBLE All persons should have access to health services that provide necessary care and contribute to wellness.	INCLUSIVE Health care is a right and a shared responsibility that is grounded in our common humanity.	ACCOUNTABLE Our health care system must be accountable, offering a quality, equitable and sustainable means of keeping us healthy as individuals and as a community.	AVAILABLE TO ALL Health Care must contribute to the common good by being available to all for individuals, families and society as a whole.

Social Principle 162 V: Right to Health Care

Health is a condition of physical, mental, social, and spiritual well-being. John 10:10b says, "I came that they may have life, and have it abundantly." Stewardship of health is the responsibility of each person to whom health has been entrusted. Creating the personal, environmental, and social conditions in which health can thrive is a joint responsibility—public and private. We encourage individuals to pursue a healthy lifestyle and affirm the importance of preventive health care, health education, environmental and occupational safety, good nutrition, and secure housing in achieving health.

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." Providing the care needed to maintain health, prevent disease, and restore health after injury or illness is a responsibility each person owes others and government owes to all, a responsibility government ignores at its peril. In Ezekiel 34:4a God points out the failures of the leadership of Israel to care for the weak: "You have not strengthened the weak, you have not healed the sick, you have not bound up the injured." As a result all suffer. Like police and fire protection, health care is best funded through the government's ability to tax each person equitably and directly fund the provider entities.

Countries facing a public health crisis such as HIV/AIDS must have access to generic medicines and to patented medicines. We affirm the right of men and women to have access to comprehensive reproductive health/family planning information and services which will serve as a means to prevent unplanned pregnancies, reduce abortions and prevent the spread of HIV/AIDS.

The right to health care includes care for persons with brain diseases, neurological conditions or physical disabilities, who must be afforded the same access to health care as all other persons in our communities. It is unjust to construct or perpetuate barriers to physical or mental wholeness or full participation in community. We believe it is a governmental responsibility to provide all citizens with health care.

(United Methodist Book of Discipline, 2008)

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