



The Heart in Health Care Reform

Resources to help people of faith engage in reflection and conversation about how health care reform moves us toward a more compassionate health care future that affords health, wholeness, and human dignity for all.

Faithful Reform in Health Care

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Introduction

As noted in “Seeking Justice in Health Care: A Guide for Advocates in Faith Communities,” people of faith will have very important roles to play as we work toward building a system of health care that works well for all of us. Specifically, as we raise “A Faith-Inspired Vision of Health Care” we are called to educate, advocate, dialogue, and offer hope about our health care future.

Communities of faith are called to these roles for several reasons:

- Through their social principles and/or resolutions, most faith communities support a system of quality and affordable health care that includes all of us.
- We reflect a broad cross-section of the American public, representing the full racial/ethnic, socio-economic, geographic, and political diversity of our country.
- Faith leaders are often among those called upon to help resolve conflict, to facilitate civil discourse, and to build bridges in the midst of community discord.
- We gather in our various communities of faith because of common shared beliefs grounded in the teachings of our sacred texts. In all faith traditions, these teachings call followers to contribute to the common good and show special concern for those who are most vulnerable.
- In the midst of our diversity, we can reflect upon and engage in dialogue about health care reform through the lens of our faith values. By doing so, we can make an important and *positive* contribution to our national discourse about the shape of our health care future.
- Grounded in our values, we can help move this difficult debate from what is politically prudent or economically feasible to dialogue which embraces compassion and justice and the moral imperative of health care for all.

“The Heart in Health Care Reform” is a post-reform project to help congregations and communities of faith move beyond cable news interpretations of health care reform to intentional reflection and conversation based on the faith-inspired values that give meaning to the lives we share together.



A Faith-Inspired Vision of Health Care

We, as people of faith, envision a society where each person is afforded health, wholeness, and human dignity.

That vision embraces a health care system that is: inclusive, accessible, affordable and accountable.

► Vision: Inclusive

Health care is a shared responsibility that is grounded in our common humanity.

In the bonds of our human family, we are created to be **equal**. We are guided by a divine will to treat each person with **dignity** and to live together as an **inclusive community**. Affirming our commitment to the common good, we acknowledge our enduring responsibility to **care for one another**. As we recognize that society is whole only when we care for the most vulnerable among us, we are led to discern the human right to health care and wholeness. Therefore, we are called to act with **compassion** by sharing our **abundant** health care resources with everyone.

► Vision: Affordable

Health care must contribute to the common good by being affordable for individuals, families and society as a whole.

We believe that in the **sacred act of creation** we are endowed with the **talents, wisdom** and **abundant resources** necessary to meet the needs of one another, including the health care needs of all. Therefore, in our calling to be **faithful stewards**, we understand our responsibility to use our health care resources **effectively**, to administer them **efficiently**, and to distribute them with **equity**.

► Vision: Accessible

All persons should have access to health services that provide necessary care and contribute to wellness.

We believe **humanity is sacred** and that all persons should benefit from those actions which contribute to our **health and wholeness**. Therefore, we are called to act with **justice** and **love**, to ensure that all of us have access to the health care we need in order to live out the **fullness of our potential** both as individuals and as contributing members of our society. We must work together to identify and overcome all barriers to and disparities in such care.

► Vision: 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.

We believe that as **spiritual and sacred vessels**, we are responsible for the **care of our bodies** to the best of our ability and for the **care of one another** regardless of individual circumstances. Therefore, individuals, families, governments, businesses, and the faith community are called to work in **partnership** for a system that ensures fully-informed, timely, quality and safe care that treats **body, mind and spirit**.

“A Faith-Inspired Vision of Health Care” was developed by the members of the Faithful Reform in Health Care coalition, an interfaith coalition of faith communities and individuals working for compassionate, comprehensive and sustainable health care reform in the United States.

Dialogue

The dichotomy of *liberal Democrats* versus *conservative Republicans* traditionally characterizes our political process. Even though everyone can agree that *health care is a people issue not a partisan issue*, this dichotomy is an ever-present force that continues to impact our discourse about health care reform. And, even though good people with good hearts and moral grounding sit on both sides of the aisle in Congress and in our state houses, the potential for reform has remained elusive until now. As we look toward the implementation and improvement of the health reform law passed in 2010, it is clear that building a system that works well for all of us will happen only when we can see the value in one another's perspectives and approach the issue with a willingness to reach consensus for the greater good.

The faith community has the potential for producing the voices needed for such collaboration. The debate surrounding health care reform must move beyond what is politically prudent or economically feasible to dialogue which embraces compassion and justice and the moral imperative of health care for all. Voices of faith are uniquely positioned to initiate such dialogue and to encourage conversation that transcends ideological difference and political partisanship. Guidance for such dialogue is offered here.

Description of dialogue

IN DIALOGUE . . .

We pay attention to the wisdom of the group.

We listen for new thinking and ideas that help us address complex and challenging issues.

A conversation is a dialogue when people in a group agree to:

- Listen deeply to one another, giving full attention to each other, looking for common ground.
- Respect the ideas and viewpoints of each person, trusting that others have part of the answer.
- Give voice to their own ideas and thinking.

In dialogue, each person also monitors her/his participation, taking responsibility for getting her/his ideas out there, while making sure that others in the group have both the clock time and a respectful environment in which to share their ideas. In dialogue, we see changes in thinking and often see new ideas emerge.

Dialogue is usually in danger when people defend their point of view, assume there is one right answer, criticize others' thinking, ask questions that are really opinions or judgments, and look only for conclusions that agree with their thinking.

[Quoted with permission from <http://www.OurHealthcareFuture.org>]

Guide for a 2-hour session

Note: If at all possible, try to make arrangements for a 2-hour session – or at least two one-hour sessions. Experience has shown that everyone wants to talk about the issue of health care reform. To allow time to present content and allow for conversation, a minimum of two hours will be needed.

Before the session:

As participants arrive:

The session:

Guide for 2 one-hour sessions

Before the session:

As participants arrive:

The session:

Templates for interactive activities

Opening/Closing Prayer & Reflections