



Jesus' Universal Health Plan

From "Musings" by Jim Burklo
www.tpcp.blogs.com/musings

Jesus told his disciples to spread the gospel. In Matthew chapter 10, Jesus first directed them to go all over Israel and heal the sick. Spreading the gospel verbally was a secondary assignment. "To heal every disease and every infirmity" was a more powerful sign of the coming reign of God on earth than any words could tell. Jesus sent his followers on a mission to offer everyone in Israel the best medical care available at the time. Jesus had a plan for universal health coverage, two millennia ago!

As followers of Jesus, we are called to put that plan into action, here and now. You and I don't need to wear whites and carry stethoscopes to do it, either. As faithful voters, we now can make a big difference in the lives of the 45 million Americans who have no health insurance, and the millions more who have inadequate or unaffordable coverage. Praying for the sick is very important. It binds us spiritually to those who suffer, and joins our souls with their process of recovery. But prayer isn't enough. Citizen activism is needed for us to become Jesus' agents of healing.

I have relatives who have no health insurance because of unemployment or other circumstances. Their assets could be wiped out and their credit destroyed if they had a catastrophic illness. In my work with the homeless, I met hundreds of people who were de-motivated from participating in the "above-ground" economy because they had no hope of ever paying off their debts to hospitals and doctors. A percentage of what little wages they earned would be garnished for the rest of their lives. Poor people often avoid going to the doctor when they are ill, turning minor health problems into major ones. Today I know people who remain on Social Security disability status because it provides health insurance they couldn't replace if they returned to work when they were able.



The inhumanity, the bureaucratic waste, and the extreme inefficiency of the current health care delivery system in America are especially appalling when compared to the extraordinary quality of care that is available to many in this country. America is the

center of medical innovation for the planet. It's time to employ that ingenuity to offer decent, basic health care to everyone. Oft-heard objections to so-called "socialized medicine" don't hold up as excuses any longer.

There are moments when ideology gives way to practicality, and this may be one of them. Changes in public opinion, a shift in the winds of politics, have opened up the conversation about universal medical insurance. In California, our governor and legislature appear to be serious about creating a system that will ensure universal coverage. Of all the proposals that I have seen, the bill offered by State Senator Sheila Kuehl, SB 840, looks best. It would mandate coverage for everyone while maintaining patient choice and competition among providers through an efficient system. (See more at www.healthcareforall.org)

Our letters to our legislators now can mirror the acts of healing that Jesus' disciples performed in the first century. This is an important way we can answer his challenge to help make whole the bodies and souls of our brothers and sisters.



Rev. Burklo and IMPACT encourage you to begin or continue the education of our policy makers and opinion makers concerning the importance of health care decisions that will truly heal "every disease and every infirmity" throughout our land. We encourage you to become part of the solution. With five health care plans now pending before our state legislature, please become informed about what they will do that is good, what they might impose that could harm. We are here to keep you updated on these plans.