



Washington Office

Evangelical Lutheran Church in America

God's work. Our hands.

June 1, 2009

Dear Lutheran Advocate –

Thank you for showing interest in advocating for a better health care system! This toolkit is designed to help you raise this issue with your congregation in a venue outside of a Sunday morning worship service by doing a **Health Care Café**.

June 2009 will be an especially important month in the health care policy discussion, and so it is crucial for people of faith from across the country to unite together as a voice for change. Plans are underway for the largest faith-inspired mobilization for health care reform EVER, to be held in Washington, DC on June 24th, 2009 (<http://www.webelievetogether.org/>). We are asking Lutherans to join this effort by raising awareness of health care issues in their communities and congregations the entire month of June (and even beyond).

Hosting a **Health Care Café** can take many forms: transform a Bible study, men's or women's group, Adult Forum, youth group, or even an informal gathering of friends into a space to discuss health and health care reform. In this toolkit, you'll find:

1. An easy-to-use agenda for a Health Care Café (see page 3), including all necessary handouts.
2. Ideas for Scriptures, "ice-breaker" group activities, and discussion questions (see pages 4-8).
3. Information about how to "Take Action" after your Health Care Café ends (see page 9).

Please let us know what you do, no matter what form it takes. Even a simple conversation among friends, multiplied around the country, will send a powerful message to our representatives in Congress that health care is a moral issue that is important to people of faith and conscience. Letting us know what you do also helps us track what Lutherans around the country are doing and allows us to encourage others by our combined effort. Everyone can be a part of this nationwide movement, and the time to plan your involvement is NOW!

We're here to help in any ways we can. Your voice, leadership, and moral courage are necessary to show our members of Congress that Lutherans are informed and engaged as we work for health care reform.

Health and Peace,

Robert Francis
Director for Domestic Policy

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Health Care Café Toolkit

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Health Care Café Facilitator’s Overview – Taking a Look at our Health Care System

Objectives:

- Discuss our individual and shared experiences with the current health care system.
- Explore the role our faith plays in shaping our understanding of health care.
- Learn several ways to become an active participant in the health care discussion.



Leader Preparation:

- Read through all session materials.
- Familiarize yourself with *Tips for Effective Discussion* and *Discussion Guidelines* (pp. 12-14)
- Check meeting space for adequate seating and set up. You want to have an area that is comfortable for discussion. Consider offering coffee or tea.
- Download any necessary handouts or materials from the ELCA website.



Materials Needed:

- Copy of the *Detailed Agenda* (pp. 4-8)
- Materials for preferred activity (pp. 4-7)
- Copies of desired handouts (pp. 9-12)
- Bibles for each participant or copies of Luke 10:30-34 and John 15:12

Health Care Café Agenda Overview

Introduction:

Health is central to our well-being, vital to relationships, and helps us live out our vocations in family, work, and community. Caring for one's own health is a matter of human necessity and good stewardship. Caring for the health of others expresses both love for our neighbors and responsibility for a just society. As a personal and social responsibility, health care is a shared endeavor.

—ELCA Social Statement, *Caring for Health: Our Shared Endeavor*

Agenda:

10 minutes: *Gathering and Opening Reflection.* Invite a participant to read **Luke 10:30-34**. Invite participants to introduce themselves and answer the question:

“What roles have you played in the current health care system – *consumer, nurse, insurance agent, employer, physician, family care-giver, etc.*?”

15 minutes: Facilitation of a Health Care Activity

- Stone Soup (pg 4-5)
- Pop Quiz on Health Care (pg 6-7)

15 minutes: *Small Group Discussion of Health Care:* Distribute copies of handout *Our Health Care at a Glance*. Ask participants to get into groups of 3-4 people. Take a few minutes to read the handout. Then ask participants to discuss the following questions:

- What has been your experience with the current health care system? Has someone in your family, or perhaps you yourself, been uninsured or had difficulty accessing medical care? What is your reaction to the handout?
- What role does your faith play in your understanding of health care? Do you think your faith is connected to health care? If so, how? If not, why?

10 minutes: Ask participants to return to large group. Invite them to share comments or highlights from their discussions.

10 minutes: *Closing.* Read John 15:12-17. Discuss action steps for moving forward.

Detailed Agenda: *Health Care Café*

Gathering and Opening Reflection (10 minutes)

Invite a participant to read **Luke 10:30-34**.

Luke 10:30-34

Jesus replied, 'A man was going down from Jerusalem to Jericho, and fell into the hands of robbers, who stripped him, beat him, and went away, leaving him half dead. Now by chance a priest was going down that road; and when he saw him, he passed by on the other side. So likewise a Levite, when he came to the place and saw him, passed by on the other side. But a Samaritan while travelling came near him; and when he saw him, he was moved with pity. He went to him and bandaged his wounds, having poured oil and wine on them. Then he put him on his own animal, brought him to an inn, and took care of him.'

Invite participants to introduce themselves and answer the following question:

"What roles have you played in the current health care system – consumer, nurse, insurance broker, employer, physician, family care-giver, etc.?"

Facilitation of a Health Care Activity (15 minutes)

Stone Soup

Objective:

The Objective of this activity is to demonstrate the ways in which we are all connected to the health care system. The activity will highlight our shared concerns and our interest as a community in addressing the shortcomings of our current system.

Set-Up:

Everyone stands together to form a circle with an open space in the middle. Each person in the circle is given a handful of stones (or marbles, paperclips, chips, pennies, etc.).

Activity:

1. The facilitator reads a statement out loud, and everyone who is affected by the statement will gently toss a stone (or whatever object you are using) into the center of the circle. This process will then repeat with different statements. The facilitator can choose to let the participants around the circle offer their own statements as well.

Example:

If you or someone you know is uninsured, toss a stone into the middle of the circle. (Everyone affected by this statement tosses a stone into the middle of the circle.)

2. After all the statements have been offered, participants are invited to reflect upon and discuss the pile of stones in the middle of the circle (i.e., "The stones represent our shared connection to health care and the common ground we have around the issue.")
3. The Facilitator thanks everyone for participating and wraps-up the discussion.

Sample Statements:

- If you have ever visited a doctor, throw a stone in the circle.
- If you or someone you know has ever not visited the doctor for fear it would be too expensive, throw a stone into the middle of the circle.
- If you or someone you know has suffered serious financial hardship due to a medical condition, throw a stone into the middle of the circle.
- If you or someone you know has ever had trouble finding coverage due to a pre-existing condition or some other factor, throw a stone into the circle.
- If you or someone you know has ever worried about how you would pay a medical bill, throw a stone into the circle.
- If you have ever worked in the medical field, throw a stone in the circle.
- If you or someone you know is currently uninsured, toss a stone into the middle of the circle.
- If you have ever had a medical emergency, throw a stone into the circle.
- If you or someone you know has ever not followed a doctor's recommended treatment because of the cost, throw a stone in the circle.
- If you or someone you know has ever had trouble affording prescription medications, throw a stone in the circle.
- If you have ever worked for a health insurance company, throw a stone in the circle.
- If you have ever been uninsured, throw a stone into the circle.
- If you or someone you know has ever had a claim rejected by an insurance company, throw a stone in the circle.
- If you or someone you know has refused to do a preventative screening test because it was too expensive, throw a stone into the circle.
- If you or someone you know is on Medicaid or Medicare, throw a stone in the circle.
- If you or someone you know has ever lost their health insurance due to loss of a job, divorce, or any other reason, throw a stone in the circle.

Feel free to include any other statements you find applicable or allow others to include their own statements

Sample Discussion Prompts:

1. What do the stones represent to you?
2. How did this activity make you feel?
3. What does this activity tell you about our health care system?
4. What does this activity tell us about our faith community?

POP QUIZ ON HEALTH CARE ACCESS

1. About how many Americans have no health coverage whatsoever—not even government-sponsored coverage for the poor?

- *25 million* ■ *30 million* ■ *35 million* ■ *40 million* ■ *45 million*

2. About what percentage of bankruptcies in the United States are directly related to unpaid medical bills?

- *20%* ■ *30%* ■ *40%* ■ *50%* ■ *60%*

3. What percent of uninsured people in the United States belong to minority populations (for example, Hispanic, African-American, Asian-Pacific)?

- *25%* ■ *50%* ■ *75%* ■ *90%*

4. How less likely are uninsured children to receive medical care for common childhood illnesses (e.g. ear infections) than are children who are insured?

- *40%* ■ *50%* ■ *60%* ■ *70%*

5. How many uninsured children in the U.S. have parents who work in a small business?

- *350,000* ■ *450,000* ■ *550,000* ■ *650,000*

6. What percent of uninsured Americans are in working families?

- *20%* ■ *40%* ■ *60%* ■ *80+%*

7. What percent of insured Americans receive their coverage through their workplace?

- *20%* ■ *30%* ■ *40%* ■ *50%* ■ *60%*

8. What percent of American employers do not offer health coverage to their employees?

- *One-third* ■ *One-half* ■ *Two-thirds*

9. What percentage of uninsured workers are employed by firms that do not offer health coverage?

- *One-third* ■ *One-half* ■ *Two-thirds*

10. During the last decade, the average employee premium contribution to his/her health insurance has increased by what percent?

- *10%* ■ *25%* ■ *50%* ■ *75%* ■ *90%*

POP QUIZ ON HEALTH CARE ACCESS—**ANWER KEY**

1. About how many Americans have no health coverage whatsoever—not even government-sponsored coverage for the poor?

■ *45 million—actually 48 million!*

2. About what percentage of bankruptcies in the United States are directly related to unpaid medical bills?

■ *50%*

3. What percent of uninsured people in the United States belong to minority populations (for example, Hispanic, African-American, Asian-Pacific)?

■ *25%*

4. How less likely are uninsured children to receive medical care for common childhood illnesses (e.g. ear infections) than are children who are insured?

■ *70%*

5. How many uninsured children in the U.S. have parents who work in a small business?

■ *550,000*

6. What percent of uninsured Americans are in working families?

■ *80+%*

7. What percent of insured Americans receive their coverage through their workplace?

■ *60%*

8. What percent of American employers do not offer health coverage to their employees?

■ *One-third*

9. What percentage of uninsured workers are employed by firms that do not offer health coverage?

■ *Two-thirds*

10. During the last decade, the average employee premium contribution to his/her health insurance has increased by what percent?

■ *75%*

Small Group Discussion of Health Care (15 minutes)

Distribute copies of handout *Our Health Care at a Glance*. Ask participants to get into groups of 3-4 people. Take a few minutes to read the handout. Then ask participants to discuss the following questions:

- What has been your experience with the current health care system? Has someone in your family, or perhaps you yourself, been uninsured or had difficulty accessing medical care? What is your reaction to the handout?
- What role does your faith play in your understanding of health care? Do you think your faith is connected to health care? If so, how? If not, why not?

Large Group Discussion of Health Care (10 minutes)

Ask participants to return to large group. Invite them to share comments or highlights from their discussions.

Closing (10 minutes)

Distribute copies of the handout *What Now*, and briefly discuss possible action steps for continued participation in the health care debate. Ideally, each person will commit to one advocacy “next step.”

Read John 15:12-17.

John 15:12-17

‘This is my commandment, that you love one another as I have loved you. No one has greater love than this, to lay down one’s life for one’s friends. You are my friends if you do what I command you. I do not call you servants any longer, because the servant does not know what the master is doing; but I have called you friends, because I have made known to you everything that I have heard from my Father. You did not choose me but I chose you. And I appointed you to go and bear fruit, fruit that will last, so that the Father will give you whatever you ask him in my name. I am giving you these commands so that you may love one another.



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What Now?

3 Things You Can Do To Be Part of the Health Care Debate

1. Contemplate!

- Pray for those affected by poor health, inadequate access to health care, and lack of health care coverage.
- Journal about your own health story, including your experience with the health care system. What worked well? What did not? What would you change, and what would you keep the same?

2. Educate!

- Read and consider the ELCA Social Statement on health and health care, "Caring for Health: Our Shared Endeavor."
- Check out the resources available in this toolkit and discuss the things you learn with family and friends.

3. Advocate!

- Go to www.elca.org/advocacy and join the ELCA's e-advocacy network to receive updates from the ELCA Washington Office about health care reform.
- Send a letter or email to your Senators and Representative. Tell them your own story and urge them to pass comprehensive health care reform this year.
- Set up in-district visits with your senator and representative. The week of June 29th, members of Congress will return to their districts for the July 4th recess. This is the perfect opportunity to schedule a visit and let them know how important health care reform is to the community of faith and members of their states and districts.

For tools and tips about how to do advocacy, visit
<http://www.elca.org/Our-Faith-In-Action/Justice/Advocacy/Get-Involved/Tools.aspx>

Our Health Care at a Glance: *What does a failing system look like?*

MORAL CRISIS

- 18,000 Americans die prematurely as a result of their lack of health insurance
- 47 million Americans are currently uninsured
- Disparities in care based on race, income, gender or geography mean many people receive low quality care or do not have access to necessary medical treatments.
- For-profit systems can value the bottom line at the expense of people's health care needs.
- Non-comprehensive insurance plans lead to more Americans lacking health security.

MEDICAL CRISIS

- The uninsured wait longer to seek care and forgo needed preventive care, often resulting in long-term medical consequences.
- Shifting nature of current system keeps many consumers from establishing a stable, long-term relationship with a health care provider.
- Many insurance plans don't offer comprehensive care and do not cover preventive care.
- Providers are forced to make decisions about treatment based on the patient's level of insurance and reimbursement rates.
- Providers are encouraged to treat episodes of illness as isolated incidents rather than providing long-term care and preventive services.

ECONOMIC CRISIS

Families:

- **50%** of all personal bankruptcies are caused by medical debt.
- Out-of-pocket costs for things like prescription drugs and dental care leave even insured families making painful decisions about what kind of treatment they can afford.
- Many workers stay in less-than-ideal jobs to avoid losing health coverage during a period of unemployment or self-employment.
- Between 2000 and 2006, premiums for job-based health insurance increased by 73.8 percent, while median worker earnings rose by only 11.6 percent.
- Increasing costs incurred by uninsured individuals who can't pay drive up all premiums.

Businesses:

- Rising health care costs eat into wage gains and profits.
- The high cost of health care leads some businesses to hire part-time workers to avoid paying for their coverage.
- Responsible small businesses are being forced to drop coverage, or shift a larger share of premiums to workers, in order to stay in business.

Government:

- Even though government provides tax incentives to both large and small employers, they still provide care for the sickest and the poorest who have been denied elsewhere.
- Health care costs are pitted against other public programs for a shrinking pot of funds under the current budget.



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Health Care Reform: A Matter of Responsibility, Faith, and Justice

“Health is central to our well-being, vital to relationships, and helps us live out our vocations in family, work, and community. Caring for one’s own health is a matter of human necessity and good stewardship. Caring for the health of others expresses both love for our neighbors and responsibility for a just society. As a personal and social responsibility, health care is a shared endeavor.”¹

ELCA Social Statement on Health and Health Care

In 2003, the ELCA adopted a social statement on health and health care entitled, “Caring for Health: Our Shared Endeavor,” which affirms that the “Christian Church is called to be an active participant in fashioning a just and effective health care system.” The social statement expresses support for the following:

- a comprehensive approach to health care as a shared endeavor among individuals, churches, government, and the wider society;
- a vision of health care and healing that includes individual, church, and social responsibilities;
- a vision of a health care system that is based on understanding health, illness, healing, and health care within a coherent set of services;
- equitable access for all people to basic health care services and to the benefits of public health efforts;
- faithful moral discernment guiding individual participation and public policymaking in health care services.

It affirms that “we of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America have an enduring commitment to work for and support health care for all people as a shared endeavor.” At minimum, that means “each person should have ready access to basic health care services that include preventive, acute, and chronic physical and mental health care at an affordable cost.”

The Urgency

Unfortunately, “health care in the United States... suffers from a prolonged crisis. People unnecessarily endure poor health. Rising health care costs leave a growing number of people without adequate health care, including the nearly 50 million people who are uninsured. Health care resources often are only available based on ability to pay rather than need. Finding access to quality health care services is difficult for many.” Additionally, the costs of health care threaten the financial health of millions of individuals and families and the long-term financial stability of our nation. And this entire situation is exacerbated by rising unemployment and the current economic recession.

The Opportunity

Despite the urgency of America’s health care crisis, true reform has eluded policymakers for decades. However, 2009 has the chance to be different. Perhaps now more than ever, a wide majority of the public and most policy makers and major stakeholders share the sincere belief that fundamental reform of the nation’s health care system is essential and possible. We urge all our leaders, regardless of political party or philosophy, to join in the commitment and conversation to achieve meaningful health care reform this year.

¹ All quotes from “Caring for Health: Our Shared Endeavor,” an ELCA social statement on health, healing, and health care. The full statement is available at <http://www.elca.org/What-We-Believe/Social-Issues/Social-Statements/Health-and-Healthcare.aspx>.

The Call to Action

As people of faith, we believe that access to quality, affordable health care should not depend upon where a person works, how much a family earns, or where a person lives. Instead, every person, created in the image and likeness of God, should have access to the things necessary to sustain life and reach his/her God-given potential, including affordable, quality health care.

With this in mind, we ask for the following:

1. **First and foremost, we believe our elected officials must pass health care reform this year.** Our health care system is sick, and nursing it to health must happen now. The cost of inaction – to our nation’s health and its economy – is simply too great. Any delay could mean an opportunity for reform lost for a generation.
2. In keeping with our faith, **we are especially concerned that any health care reform must protect the most vulnerable.** This belief is rooted in the biblical call to heal the sick and to serve “the least of these,” our concern for human life and dignity, and the principle of the common good.
3. Finally, **we believe that health care reform must be comprehensive, meaning that it must:**
 - Cover everyone, so that no person relies on an emergency room for their health care or delays treatment because they lack insurance or have been denied coverage;
 - Provide quality health coverage choices that are truly affordable to all families regardless of income;
 - Protect and enhance the health of lower-income families and children by strengthening Medicaid and SCHIP;
 - Allow people to receive appropriate long-term services and supports that respect their individual choices and needs; and
 - Rest on a financially sustainable foundation by making sure people get the care they need when they need it and controlling costs.

Three Things You Can Do

1. **Contemplate!**
 - a. Pray for those affected by poor health, inadequate access to health care, and lack of health care coverage.
 - b. Journal about your own health story, including your experience with the health care system. What worked well? What did not? What would you change, and what would you keep the same?
2. **Educate!**
 - a. Read and consider the ELCA Social Statement on health and health care, “Caring for Health: Our Shared Endeavor.”
 - b. Pick a Sunday in May or June and organize a “Health Care Sunday” in your congregation. For more information, including materials and idea suggestions, contact Robert Francis at robert.francis@elca.org or (202) 626-7936.
3. **Advocate!**
 - a. Go to www.elca.org/advocacy to join the ELCA’s e-advocacy network to receive updates from the ELCA Washington Office about health care reform.
 - b. Send a letter or email to your Senators and Representative, telling your own story and urging them to pass comprehensive health care reform this year.

For more information, contact Robert Francis, the ELCA’s Director for Domestic Policy, at robert.francis@elca.org or (202) 626-7936.

Tips for Effective Discussion Leadership

Courtesy of the Study Circles Resource Center

1. Be prepared.

The leader does not need to be an expert (or even the most knowledgeable person in the group) on the topic being discussed, but should be the best prepared for the discussion. This means understanding the goals of the adult forum, familiarity with the subject, thinking ahead of time about the directions in which the discussion might go, and preparation of discussion questions to aid the group in considering the subject. Solid preparation will enable you to give your full attention to group dynamics and to what individuals in the group are saying.

2. Set a relaxed and open tone.

- Welcome everyone and create a friendly and relaxed atmosphere.
- Well-placed humor is always welcome and helps people focus on ideas rather than personalities.

3. Establish clear guidelines for the discussion.

- At the beginning of the session, establish the guidelines and ask participants if they agree to them or want to add anything:
- All group members are encouraged to express and reflect on their honest opinions.
- All views should be respected.
- Though disagreement and conflict about ideas can be useful, disagreements should not be personalized. Put-downs, name-calling, labeling, or personal attacks will not be tolerated.
- It is important to hear from everyone. People who tend to speak a lot in groups should make special efforts to allow others the same opportunity.
- The role of the leader is to remain neutral and to guide conversation according to the ground rules.

4. Stay aware of and assist the group process.

- Always use your “third-eye”; you are not only helping to keep the group focused on the content of the discussion, but you will be monitoring how well the participants are communicating with each other – who has spoken, who hasn’t spoken, and whose points haven’t yet received a fair hearing.
- Consider splitting up into smaller groups to examine a variety of viewpoints or to give people a chance to talk more easily about their personal connection to the issue.
- When wrestling with when to intervene, err on the side of non-intervention.

- Don't talk after each comment or answer every question; allow participants to respond directly to each other. The most effective leaders often say little, but reflect on how to move the group toward its goals.
- Don't be afraid of silence. It sometimes takes a while for someone to offer an answer to a question you pose.
- Don't let anyone dominate; try to involve everyone.
- Remember: a forum is not a debate but a group dialogue. If participants forget this, don't hesitate to ask the group to help re-establish the guidelines.

5. Help the group grapple with content

- Make sure the group considers a wide range of views. Ask the group to think about the advantages and disadvantages of different ways of looking at an issue or solving a problem. In this way, the trade-offs involved in making tough choices become apparent.
- Ask participants to think about the concerns and values that underlie their beliefs.
- Don't allow the group to focus on or be overly influenced by one particular personal experience or anecdote.
- Either summarize the discussion occasionally or encourage group members to do so.
- Remain neutral about content and be cautious about expressing your own values.
- Help participants to identify "common ground" but don't try to force consensus.

6. Use questions to help make the discussion more productive.

Some useful discussion questions:

- What seems to be the key point here?
- What is the crux of your disagreement?
- Does anyone want to add to (or support, or challenge) that point?
- Could you help us understand the reasons behind your opinion?
- What experiences or beliefs might lead people of faith to support that point of view?

7. Reserve adequate time for closing the discussion.

- Ask the group for last comments and thoughts about the subject.
- You may wish to ask participants to share any new ideas or thoughts they've had as a result of the discussion.
- If you will be meeting again, remind the group of the readings and subject for the next session.
- Thank everyone for their contributions.
- Provide some time for the group to evaluate the group process.

Discussion Guidelines

Courtesy of the Study Circles Resource Center

- Share your concerns and beliefs.
- Listen carefully to others.
- Be willing to examine your own beliefs in light of what others say.
- Speak your mind freely, but strive to maintain an open mind.
- Strive to understand the values and ideas of those who see things differently from you.
- Cooperate with the leaders to keep the discussion on track.
- Be sure that everyone has equal time to share their ideas.
- Address remarks to the group and not an individual.
- Communicate your needs to the leaders.
- Value your own experience and opinions.
- It is OK to disagree.
- Humor and a pleasant manner can go far in helping you make your points. They help everyone to remember that disagreement is not personal. When we disagree in this dialogue, we disagree about values or ideas, not about individuals or personalities.