

## **The Episcopal Church - Promoting Health Care for All**

3/25/2009

"Almighty and most merciful God, we remember before you all poor and neglected persons whom it would be easy for us to forget: the homeless and the destitute, the old and the sick, and all who have none to care for them. Help us to heal those who are broken in body and spirit, and to turn their sorrow into joy. Grant this, Father, for the love of your Son, who for our sake became poor, Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen." -The Book of Common Prayer

Today, there are approximately 47 million uninsured Americans, 8 million of whom are children. About 116 million Americans struggle to pay medical bills, are uninsured or underinsured, or go without needed care because of the cost. President Obama and Republicans and Democrats in the 111th Congress recognize the need to act now to deal with this health care crisis. The issues are complex but the facts are stark:

- About 80 percent of the uninsured are in low- and moderate-income families who do not qualify for Medicaid.
- The lack of access to medical care has resulted in negative health consequences for the uninsured, including fewer cancer screenings, mammograms, and dental exams; delayed test results and treatment; unfilled or skipped drug prescriptions; and more emergency room and hospital visits for care.
- The uninsured are less likely to receive preventive care through regular check-ups, increasing the incidences of chronic illness and associated health care costs.

Further, the state of the U.S. economy and increasing claims for jobless benefits threaten to increase the number of Americans joining the ranks of the uninsured. Experts estimate that a percentage point increase in unemployment could lead to an increase of 1.1 million more uninsured.

In light of this health care crisis affecting so many of our neighbors, we are called to commit ourselves to restoring the wholeness and well-being of God's creation. We cannot afford to overlook the needs and health of millions of Americans who lack access to basic health care services. As people of faith, we have an opportunity to be both a healing presence and a voice of justice for those in need. Stewardship requires not only care for the Earth's environment but also care for one another, respecting the dignity of human beings and providing a healing balm for those in need of basic health care. You can find more information and resources on this issue (including this week's bulletin insert) here.

### **Lenten Discipline: Becoming Aware**

This week is Cover the Uninsured Week, a mobilization effort organized by the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation -- the nation's largest philanthropy devoted exclusively to improving the health and health care of all Americans -- to advocate on behalf of the uninsured. In observance of Cover the Uninsured Week, please join doctors, nurses, schools, businesses, lawmakers and congregations from all across the country in the effort to raise awareness about the lack of access to quality affordable health care and the critical need to cover the uninsured.

This week commit to finding out more about the uninsured and the impact of the lack of health care on wholeness and well-being. Look out for stories in local media about health care. Join with your neighbors or your local parish to share stories and concern about health care. Organize a bible study or group discussion about health care for the uninsured. Look for an opportunity -- a town hall meeting, call in-radio show -- to ask your Member of Congress about his/her solutions to the health care crisis.