

**It is recommended:**

**That the Women's Division reaffirm principles of the United Methodist Church and United Methodist Women that lift up health care as a human right, and the right to quality health care for ALL within our borders, regardless of age, income, race, gender or status, including reproductive health care. While affirming a "Medicare for All" (or Single Payer) plan as the most effective means of delivering health care to all, the church also affirms interim federal and state plans that move us in that direction.**

**That the Women's Division urge United Methodist Women to actively engage in education, advocacy and public witness at a decisive moment for the future of health care delivery in the US, to bring our values and concerns to the national debate. Having gathered in public vigil at the Fall 2009 Annual Meeting of the Women's Division, we call on United Methodist Women across the country to join in the national dialogue and all forms of advocacy for equitable, inclusive health care reform as a sign of our Christian witness to the value of all God's children and for their health and well-being.**

**Background:**

United Methodist Women believe that health is the right of all God's children. The United Methodist Church in its Social Principles regards healthcare as a basic human right ... "We encourage individuals to pursue a healthy lifestyle and ... also recognize the role of governments in ensuring each individual has access to those elements necessary to good health." (Social Principles, ¶162T).

Furthermore, the United Methodist Book of Resolutions, elaborates that health care is a universal right for all people in a just society: "UMC is committed to health care for all in the US and therefore advocates for a comprehensive health care delivery system that includes access for all, quality care, and effective management of costs," including "... *Single Payer*. We call for swift passage of legislation which will entitle all persons within the borders of the United States to provision of health care services, the cost of such services to be equally shared by American taxpayers, and the government to distribute the funds to providers in a coordinated and comprehensive manner... Choice of private doctor and other health care providers would be maintained..." and "*Incremental Steps toward Single Payer*. We recognize that much of the cost savings of "single payer" flow from the virtually total elimination of the health insurance industry. We cannot wait to overcome current barriers to a single payer plan, and therefore support all initiatives that move segments of our population closer to a single payer system." (#3201 Health Care for All in the United States)

The prospect of health-care reform affects all of us, and as people of faith, we must take action to ensure that God's vision of abundant life is fulfilled for every one of God's children so that we care for our health and that of our neighbors. In accepting this just

vision of health care, we as United Methodist Women will add our voices to the call for a justice-filled system of health care that is:

- **Inclusive:** Health care is a right and a shared responsibility that is grounded in our common humanity.
- **Affordable:** Health care must contribute to the common good by being available to everyone, especially those who cannot afford it.
- **Accessible:** All persons should have access to health services that provide necessary care and contribute to wellness. This means intentional efforts to locate doctors and services in all communities that need them.
- **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.

**However, no national health plan could be complete without:**

- Providing the full range of family planning services that promote reproductive health and freedom, access to contraception, comprehensive sexuality education, and assure confidentiality so that women seek needed care in a timely way. (UMC Resolution #2026 Responsible Parenthood and #3208 In Response to Hospital Mergers).
- Addressing the needs of and provide access to the health care for “*all persons within the borders of the United States*” (UMC Resolution #3201 Health Care for All in the United States), including citizens, residents and undocumented immigrants. This is both a justice and a public health imperative. “Excluding access to health care needs promotes an increase in the demand on emergency rooms to provide that daily care or it forces migrants who are fearful to seek medical care to live in continued pain and suffering.” (UMC Resolution # 3281. Welcoming the Migrant to the US)
- Assuring that health care is provided equally to young, middle aged and old, without differential costs or requirements (UMC Resolution #3022 Aging in the United States: The Church’s Response).

**Taking Action:**

Women’s Division urges United Methodist Women to mobilize for advocacy and public witness that bring our Christian values of inclusion, well-being and justice to national health care legislation at this critical juncture. United Methodist Women can:

- Consult with the UMW Public Policy office, UMW Health and Healthcare Program, and ecumenical partners such as Faithful Reform ([www.faithfulreform.org](http://www.faithfulreform.org)) in the coming months for regular updates on legislative action. Contact your legislators as proposals emerge, to ensure that our principles are part of bills being currently considered.

- Hold vigils in your community, congregation or local unit for equitable, inclusive health care legislation as a sign of our Christian witness for everyone's right to health care. A toolkit for worship and prayer can be found at [www.faithfulreform.org/storage/frhc/.../LightShine/tool%20kit.pdf](http://www.faithfulreform.org/storage/frhc/.../LightShine/tool%20kit.pdf). Let Faithful Reform know (online at [www.faithfulreform.org](http://www.faithfulreform.org)) and let the Women's Division know (Betty Gittens, [bgittens@gbgm-umc.org](mailto:bgittens@gbgm-umc.org)) of your plans. Be sure to contact the local press.
- Challenge media myths that distort current proposals for health care reform in veiled attacks on the poor, and on marginalized sectors of our nation. Confront efforts to demonize certain members of our population such as undocumented immigrants; to deny choice in health care services especially reproductive health; and to penalize older people with higher premiums. This can be in conversations at work, in church or with family members, or by sharing your views with the local newspaper and or radio.

**Biblical Base:** "I came that they might have life and have it abundantly" (John 10:10)

**Policy Base:** Social Principles, ¶162T; 2008 Book of Resolutions; #3201 Health Care for All in the United States; #3281 Welcoming the Stranger to the US; 3208 United Methodist Response to Hospital Mergers; #3022 Aging in the United States: The Church's Response and #2026 Responsible Parenthood.