

TITLE: "The COVID-19 Pandemic: Justice. Healing. Courage.

"Challenging extreme inequity locally and globally is a moral imperative." Escalating Economic Inequity, 2017 Statement of Conscience

Unitarian Universalists are heartbroken. Three million people have died in the world and millions more live in poverty and isolation because of the COVID-19 pandemic. Many will be traumatized for the rest of their lives. Lessons learned during 2020-2021 plague year force us to look at the American healthcare system.

The extreme inequity in American medicine and in public health has been exposed during recent months. African-Americans, indigenous peoples, and Latinx people are experiencing disproportionately high infection, hospitalization, and death rates because of the COVID-19 pandemic. The elderly and people with disabilities have been hit especially hard. The needs of LGBTQ+ people have often been ignored in health care. Lower-income workers, especially women, are frequently exposed to health and safety hazards while often lacking adequate protection, representation, and medical insurance.

The COVID-19 pandemic has brought the Unitarian Universalist Association to a turning point. Unitarian Universalists recognize the need to build back better in programs for medical care and public health, in labor and community organizing, and in congregation-based programs for social and personal wellness, advocacy, and caregiving.

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that this General Assembly affirms its commitment to creating a health care system that is accessible, equitable, comprehensive, and culturally acceptable. We agree with the World Health Organization that health is a state of complete physical, mental, and social well-being and not merely the absence of disease or infirmity.

- o Government agencies have a moral obligation to provide crucial services during the current emergency and during the pandemic recovery. All people need medical care, food, housing, and other essentials, today and during the reconstruction process. We will support the work that is needed.

- o We encourage young people and older people to give thanks and to care for each other. We ask Congress and the President of the United States to designate the fourth Thursday in November as a multiracial and multicultural holiday with an emphasis on healing and community service.
- o We are grateful for the health care workers, teachers and social workers, food and transportation workers, and for many others, who have cared for people during the COVID-19 pandemic. All workers need adequate protection, compensation, and representation. We support labor law reform and protecting the right to organize.
- o We support the development of a national health services program that will provide comprehensive health care for all Americans without out-of-pocket medical costs. We encourage Unitarian Universalists to join together in helping to develop this program. We are especially concerned about the problems of racism, gender injustice, and ageism and ableism, in medicine and in public health. We are concerned about economic justice and the problems experienced by consumers and workers.
- o We ask the Unitarian Universalists for a Just Economic Community (UUJEC) to prepare a proposed Congregational Study/Action Issue (CSAI) statement that will call for a four year congregational study of public health and medical care in the United States. Congregation members and friends should have opportunities to testify about their experiences and their health care needs. A summary of the comments received should be shared with the General Assembly. Recommendations for government programs and for congregation-based programs should be included when developing a Statement of Conscience.

We know that the government alone can't do everything that's needed to make healthful living possible. We ask for health care ministries that will help to empower the oppressed during an era of pandemics, environmental problems, and extreme inequity. We will side with love in our work for social and personal wellness.

END -

-

