

# EDITORIAL: Dr. Micahâ€™s health care prescription

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What will our nation do about health care? That question dominates the American social and political landscape this autumn.

But another question hovers in the mists of that landscape. It’s almost as important and perhaps even more troubling: Will U.S. Christians be part of the health care problem, or will we contribute to the solution?

Judging by what we saw this hot, hazy summer, Christians probably will exacerbate the issue. Time after time, we watched as people simultaneously trumpeted their faith and blasted opponents who disagreed with them about how to ensure and insure health care. It wasn’t a pretty sound. And I fear for the damage done to the reputation of Jesus Christ by the vitriol spewed by his followers.

Editor Marv Knox

In an effort to dissipate heat and shine light, the *Baptist Standard* and our New Voice Media partners—Associated Baptist Press, Virginia’s *Religious Herald* and Missouri’s *Word & Way*—have prepared a package of articles on health care, which we’re introducing on page 1 of this paper. Our reporters and editors have worked hard to help you base your decision about possible solutions on facts and informed analysis of the status of health care in our country.

At the outset, let me say that I’m not advocating a specific solution. I think we should be able to build consensus around two parallel ideas: Solid health care should be available to all Americans. And something must be done to stem the rising costs of medical treatment, which not only crimp coverage, but also threaten to cripple the economy.

Personally, I've been fascinated by proposals that would eliminate for-profit insurance companies in favor of not-for-profit insurance organizations. I've also been intrigued by ideas that eliminate administrative costs of both health care and insurance coverage, emphasize preventive care, guarantee insurance portability and protect people from having their coverage summarily denied, particularly through no fault of their own. And I would love to live in a country where everyone has a right to a healthy and decent level of basic medical care and where all Americans can insure themselves to ensure they receive the most comprehensive and excellent health care in the world.

By now, steam may be streaming out your ears because you have projected one model or another of health care upon the ideas I've just shared. If that is the case, I have one plea for you: Calm down. The First Amendment guarantees free speech. The social construct of our country calls for a civil exchange of ideas—a concept that seems lost in 2009.

I hope and pray Christians and other people of faith would lead the way toward finding a solution to this vital issue by embracing three principles outlined in the sixth chapter of the Old Testament book of Micah:

- **Act justly.** *If we truly believe all people are created in God's image and are of equal worth, then justice demands that we guarantee access to adequate medical care, and that it not be offered only to those who possess special status. We have developed a consensus regarding the human right to food, clothing and shelter. Well, shelter should include at least a decent level of protection from disease and physical malady, as well as protection from the elements.*

- **Love mercy.** *This may be the hardest part. Mercy extends to those who are different, those we don't like, and even—or especially—those we don't think deserve it. Frankly, we can identify plenty of people who, we think, don't deserve full medical care. But the prophet didn't include an*

*opt-out clause for mercy.*

- **Walk humbly with God.** *Lord, do we all need humility. Especially when we're worried and scared. But humility with God—extended to others—can help us find a solution.*

Marv Knox is editor of the *Baptist Standard*. Visit his FaithWorks blog [here](#).