

## **Introduction**

### **THE HISTORY AND PROMISE OF THIS WORK**

We invite you to join us in flexing your civic muscles and to become part of a social movement that is long overdue – health care for all. We believe that when informed citizens come together, they can affect policy and create change.

#### **Who we are**

This project began when a small group of citizens and members of Cedars Unitarian Universalist Church on Bainbridge Island, Washington, came together to talk about health care in the U.S. After our initial meeting we wanted to do more than just talk, so we developed this learning and discussion series, “The Moral Imperative of Health Care Reform.”

We do not know how many people this project will touch or how far it will travel—the classic “message in a bottle.” We *do* know, however, that the time for reform is long overdue and urge you to join with us in this important civic and social movement.

#### **About the six sessions**

This six-session Study Circle Program combines:

- Reading background articles in order to educate ourselves on the issues and to facilitate discussions
- Sharing our stories and hearing about other people—thus illuminating the state of healthcare on personal, political, and systemic fronts.
- Individual and group activities to make real the problems as well as the solutions.

We include a variety of perspectives with the aim of not only informing and empowering participants, but to create what we call a “citizen think tank” in order to influence healthcare policy at the local, state, and federal levels.

#### **Becoming an informed citizen is not the only goal.**

We urge you to commit to creating—with us—an ever-widening circle of citizens to bring about change. Every member of your “think tank” can start another Circle, write a letter to the editor, or create an event in your own community. Here on Bainbridge Island, our goal is to hold a community forum, open to the public, but also to create a way for Study Circle “graduates” to come together, share their experiences, and keep the movement for reform going forward. We will invite legislators and other policy makers to hear directly from informed, committed constituents.

Along the way, you will meet many people who doubt that ordinary people can bring about change. Yet, many of the rights and programs that we take for granted today came about through the initiative of citizens just like us. We sincerely hope that our project—to break through confusion and create engaged citizenship—will be as meaningful for you as it has been for us.

Wishing you good health and better health care,

*Barbara Clarke, Karen Scarvie, and Joanna Garritano, MD - Curriculum Committee*