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A Healthcare SYSTEM: Hope Grows!

Amid life's big challenges it is indeed the case that we are not alone in efforts to deal with them.

I suspect that getting healthcare in much better gear would qualify as one of those major challenges.

In Kentucky we have a number of institutions, agencies, organizations and very gifted committed people working hard on this issue. Special among them at this time: a collaboration among Foundation for a Healthy Kentucky, UK's School of Public Health, and KET.

This collaboration was responsible for convening almost 60 local "Kentucky Conversations for Health Action" earlier this year. In this area such happened in Nelson, Washington and Marion Counties. (Special blessings on all who convened and participated in this noble effort!)

All this citizen wisdom was gathered into a state-wide forum September 25—the Howard L Bost Memorial Health Policy Forum. Six local concerned people were among the nearly 300 participants.

A special focus of this state forum was a call for Kentucky communities to take on health care change, making it work better. Nelson County can be very proud of the Healthy Community efforts of the past five years. Courage can be taken from other often similar efforts all around Kentucky.

There is a bigger complementary effort needed though—the national component of health care. At the September 25 Forum, American Medical Association president Dr Ron Davis spurred hope with practical proposals for making health care more available to all. (Candidates for US president are hard at work on such proposals, too.)

John Glaser from California sparked a lot of new

energy with his focus on our need to bring *values* to health care, a task he calls "public conscience work."

Some of his very thought provoking and energizing points:

Our country doesn't have a healthcare *system*. (A patch work quilt might be a better image for it.) This lack of a *system* is at the root of our problem—much more so than lack of insurance.

As we strive to build a system, we need to come at the work as grandparents concerned for our precious children's children.

Our current dysfunctional gridlock is another instance of chronic social injustice. (Other instances: child labor, women's suffrage, Jim Crowe policies.)

To build a system we need to determine our *values*, our *priorities* about what we want to happen, to name a *vision* of what we want to see, and to build a *system* that delivers on that vision, and then establish the needed public policy and *programs*.

To the extent that we stay with our current piece work health care, chronic social injustice continues.

To build a real healthcare system will take the will of us concerned people who exercise our citizenship responsibilities. We need to SEE what is going on, JUDGE it in light of our principles, and ACT to make life better for all—because ALL of us have precious human dignity and human rights.

Our Kentucky deliberating is an important contribution to this state and national community task. It is up to you and me and us!

We are not alone in this struggle!

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The Catholic Conference of Kentucky (CCK) is an agency of the Catholic Bishops of Kentucky, established in 1968. It speaks for the Church in matters of public policy, serves as liaison to government and the legislature, and coordinates communications and activities between the church and secular agencies. There are 406,000 Catholics in the Commonwealth. The Bishops of the four dioceses of KY constitute CCK's Board of Directors.