**Prayer Vigil for Medicaid Expansion**

***Leader:*** Welcome! We gather today as people of faith to reflect on the opportunity before our Commonwealth to help 300,000 Virginians who are without health insurance or don’t receive the help they could to access adequate healthcare by adopting a budget that expands Medicaid. We have come to ask for God to bestow wisdom on our legislators so that they would not shy away from their moral duty to provide a state budget that offers compassion and justice to “the least of these.” We have come to ask for God’s strength and courage to act through us as we call for justice and compassion. today and in the days to come.

We are gathered this first day of March. We see inklings of Spring around us and we get excited about warmth and new life coming forth. Similarly, we see inklings of a path forward in Virginia for expanding healthcare for all. We anticipate and hope for a time soon when more of us in Virginia will have access to healthcare. Let us hear some passages from Sacred Scripture.

***Reader One: “***God created humankind in his image, in the image of God he created them.” (Genesis 1:27) “I will bring health and healing to it (Judah); I will heal my people and will let them enjoy abundant peace and security.” (Jeremiah 33:6)

***Reader Two:*** “Seek the welfare of the city where I have sent you… and pray to the Lord on its behalf, for in its welfare you will have your welfare.” (Jeremiah 29:7)

***Reader Three:*** “Do not withhold good from those to whom it is due, when it is in your power to act. Do not say to your neighbor, ‘come back tomorrow and I’ll give it to you’ – when you already have it with you” (Proverbs 3:27-28)

***Leader:*** Although there is never perfect unanimity on anything, our Virginia faith communities and leaders have been strong supporters of expanding healthcare by drawing down federal Medicaid dollars. Hear from a few of Virginia’s faith leaders. (Ask people to take turns reading the various short statements from Virginia faith leaders.).

***Leader:***  Let us pray together. We will pray for those among us in need of healthcare and who struggle to pay for healthcare. We pray for our Senate. We pray for each of us to be the advocates for justice we are called to be.

***All:*** God of all life, you call us into community and by your example teach us to care for one another. We know that you desire that we all live in abundance. And yet perhaps some of us here today and certainly many others in our community have no regular access to healthcare or worry about how they will pay for medical bills if they are their children get sick.

***Leader:*** We lift up the names of those who struggle without adequate healthcare: (Everyone is invited to lift up names of people who need better access to healthcare.)

***All:*** We pray for those whose position and authority affect the lives of others. Inspire them with a vision of the community as you have designed it where love of neighbor and concern for one another drive out self-interest, anxiety and fear.

***Leader:*** We pray especially for our Senator (or Senators) as the Senate grapples in the next two weeks on whether or not to expand healthcare to needy Virginians by tapping federal dollars. We know the House of Delegates has created a bi-partisan plan to tap federal Medicaid dollars to expand healthcare in a fiscally responsible way. Be with Senator \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ and all other Senators as they discern what is best for Virginia.

***All:*** Help us all to work together with one heart and will, with sympathy and understanding, to serve the common good, to help those in need and to build a community where all receive dignity and respect as your precious children.

***Leader:*** Creator God, you placed us in the world to be its salt and we are often afraid to commit ourselves, to be stained by the world, to hear what others might say. And our salt dissolved as if in water. Guiding God, you placed us in the world to be its light and we were afraid of the shadows, afraid of the poverty, unwilling to know other people’s needs, and our light slowly faded away. Loving God, you placed us in the world to live in community, and thus you taught us to love, to share life, to struggle for justice. Fill us this day with your strength and empower us to share your love freely, lavishly and fearlessly with all.

***All:*** In this time of decision-making, let us not be content to wait and see what will happen, but give us the courage and determination to make the right things happen. While time is running out, save us from patience which is akin to cowardice, give us the courage to be either hot or cold, to stand for the principles of the value and dignity of every person and the right of all people to adequate and affordable health care. Guide us as we speak truth to power and fill us with your loving presence.

**Song:**

 This little light of mine, I’m gonna let it shine. (3x)

 Let it shine, let it shine, let it shine.

 All around the Commonwealth, I’m gonna let it shine…

 Even in the Senate, I’m gonna let it shine….

 Healthcare is for everyone, I’m gonna let it shine…

 Don’t let apathy blow it out, I’m gonna let it shine…

 Pray for health expansion now, I’m gonna let it shine….

 This little light of mine, I’m gonna let it shine….

***Leader:*** Thank you for your presence today. If you haven’t yet called or emailed your Senator, stay around a few minutes and do so. Also, make a Facebook live video. You may need a partner to help you. But, let’s post some videos sharing our concerns with those not here. Now join me in our closing prayer:

***All:***Blessed God, who calls us to be a blessing to the world, guide us I our search for justice and compassion in our Commonwealth. Save us from the fear of powerful people. Inspire us and our legislative representatives to speak up for those who have been left behind by our society and silenced by the loud voices of power and privilege. Grant us persistence in prayer that we might see the coming of a community of peace, justice and compassion as you have designed it. Amen

*Please stay and make a call, send an email and make a Facebook live posting of yourself encouraging your friends to advocate healthcare expansion.*

Special thanks to Rev. Pat Shipley for her work in designing this service.

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