



Goal 3:

GOOD HEALTH AND WELL-BEING

In many ways, we regard health as both personal and private. Our health is influenced by our lifestyle and our genetics, and it is a private matter between doctor and patient. At the same time, everyone's health is part of a global system and international politics. Diseases know no borders, and a medical discovery that saves lives is often the result of research conducted in a distant country. We have a shared responsibility to find solutions that give everyone the best conditions to enjoy good health, and that is what Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 3 is all about.

Half of the world's population does not have access to basic health services.⁵ Maternal and child mortality, malaria, tuberculosis, AIDS, cancer, problems related to substance abuse, antibiotic resistance, mental illness ... The list of health-related issues that must be solved is long. But fortunately, we are making continuous progress. Many of the diseases that claim lives today, especially in developing countries, are diseases that can be prevented and treated.

If we can secure access to medicines and health services at a price that people can afford, we will have come a long way towards achieving this goal. When proper healthcare is available, it increases the chances of children surviving their first five years and of mothers surviving birth. If more people receive sex education, access to contraception and freedom from sexual violence, we will be able to improve the situation even more. New research is also making great strides. People are now able to live with many diseases that would have been a death sentence twenty years ago. If we can engage people on a global scale to commit to research, innovation and technology with the aim of solving the world's health problems, could we be closer than we would otherwise imagine to ensuring healthy lives for everyone?

Biblical reflection

"A cheerful heart is a good medicine, but a downcast spirit dries up the bones" (Proverbs 17:22). This saying shows us that the Bible does not talk about health in modern medical terms, but rather about well-being and good relationships. The biblical expression "shalom", often translated "peace", encompasses this understanding of well-being. This is also how the World Council of Churches defines health: "Health is a dynamic state of well being of the individual and society, of physical, mental, spiritual, economic, political, and social well being – of being in harmony with each other, with the material environment and with God."

The healings that Jesus performed affirm this holistic understanding of health. People are set free, not only from physical suffering, but also from exclusion, stigmatisation and shame. Many of them suffered from chronic diseases; often, it was the most vulnerable who were healed by Jesus. They had their dignity affirmed; Jesus raised them up to new life and restored relationships.

From this perspective, good health implies just and equal access to basic health services, especially for people at the margins of society. This is how Jesus acts when healing (John 9), empowering people to cope with their situation and its challenges. That is what it means to promote good health, as our health does not have to be perfect, but good enough for a good and meaningful life.

Challenge

Migrants are an example of a group who can often be in a vulnerable health situation, and many lack access to primary healthcare. Can you think of any other groups who are in a difficult situation in terms of health, either in your local community or elsewhere in the world? What can you do to improve opportunities for these groups to lead healthy lives?

Questions

- Discuss the claim that health in the biblical sense is primarily about being whole and having good relationships.
- In the context of international ecumenical work, health justice is an important issue. Is it a relevant topic in our context?

Prayer

*Good Holy Spirit, breath of life in our body,
We pray for all those who live with pain,
And fight against the forces of death.
Teach us to share hope, comfort and medical care.
We thank you for everything that strengthens life
and health.*

*We commit everything and everyone, into your
hands, Lord. Amen.*