



**We are  
Called**

**TO HEAL. TO UNITE. TO JUSTICE.**

## Team Reflection—Huddle

### No. 7 Assumptions & Language Services

Words shape our mental images, affect our emotions and create realities. We all have had experiences when words fail, or when we have struggled to find the best words to describe a situation. Layered atop such common occurrences is the strange language and acronyms peppered throughout every aspect of medical care. Our work in the clinical setting can impact all aspects of the patient's life and well-being.

Dr. Aana Marie Vigen, a theology professor at the University of Loyola Chicago, researched health care experiences of women of color and documented their stories. Vigen relates the experience of one third-year, bi-lingual medical student who identifies as Puerto Rican. Her reflection describes the problems that arise from a combination of fear and language when cultures differ between patients and clinicians. Even if unintentional, such dynamics create reluctance in patients who thereby withhold information about their symptoms or refrain from admitting they need more information to better understand.

At Pentecost we witness a gathering of Jesus's disciples from every nation hearing and speaking of God's deeds and power. All of this unfolds in each person's native language<sup>i</sup>. This unity across a diversity of language is seen as a gift of inclusion and demonstrates the power of God's Spirit to include diverse people as part of God's healing grace<sup>ii</sup>. Such images inspire us to resist seeing language differences as a barrier, but rather, to see that we have the skills and technology to foster inclusion.

#### **Consider**

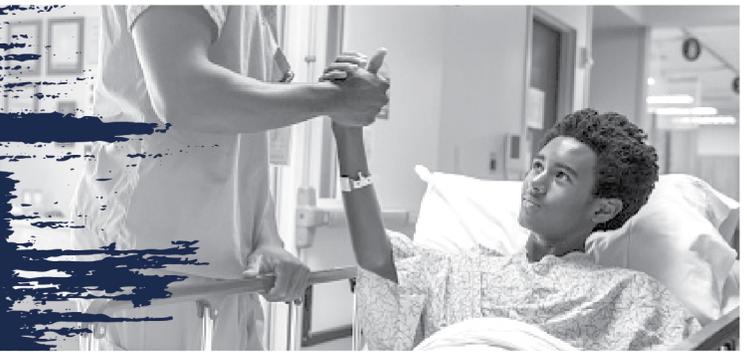
If you feel sick while on vacation in a foreign country, how would you hope to navigate the language barrier during your hospitalization?

#### **Let us pray together,**

*O God, who created all peoples in your image,  
We thank you for the wonderful diversity of races and cultures in this world.  
Enrich our lives by ever-widening circles of fellowship,  
and show us your presence in those who differ most from us,  
until our knowledge of your love is made perfect*

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*in our love for all your children.*

*We make our prayer in your Holy Name, AMEN.*

*Adapted from *The Book of Common Prayer**

[7.0] Aana Marie Vigen, *Women, Ethics, and Inequality in U.S. Healthcare: To Count Among the Living* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan), 161-162.

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<sup>i</sup> Acts 2:5–13

<sup>ii</sup> Acts 10:44–48