



## **Chicago's Faith Community Protests Reduced Inner-City Hospital Services** March 13, 2006

### **Communities in Action**

After Advocate Health Care sought approval to dramatically reduce the services it provides to Chicago's West Side residents at Advocate Bethany Hospital, a coalition of religious leaders held a mass prayer session in protest, Spero News reported on March 13.

Hundreds of community members joined the Clergy Committed to Save Bethany, Save Our Community at the "Emergency Prayer" event, held in front of the hospital's recently closed emergency room.

"Last year, we challenged executives of Advocate to explain why they were not seeking investments at Bethany on the same scale as they were making in suburban hospitals," wrote the pastors.

Advocate is a non-profit, religiously affiliated hospital network, required by its annual \$70 million in tax exemptions to provide low-cost or free healthcare to the indigent and uninsured, populations which are prevalent in the West Side neighborhoods.

However, Advocate has asked regulators to approve a major reduction in services, which would eliminate Bethany's OB/GYN, mental health and substance abuse units. In the impoverished West Side area, hospitalization rates for mental illness and substance abuse are twice and three times higher than the city average, respectively.

The Illinois Health Facilities Planning Board (IHFPB) approved Advocate's \$239 million expansion of its Park Ridge hospital, Lutheran General, last November, but only on the condition that Advocate maintain its funding commitment to the West Side.

On March 14, the IHFPB will meet to review Advocate's spending practices in the West Side. Cook County Commissioner Roberto Maldonado is also conducting a public hearing on Advocate's recent Bethany cuts on March 13.