

**September 2021**

**Theme: Social Care and the Health Service**

*Welcome to 30 minutes of prayer. Periods of silence throughout, for your own private prayer, perhaps continuing the themes suggested by the brief biddings given as we go along.*

We meet in the name of God: Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

Jesus said: "where two or three are gathered in my name, I am there among them."

*Let's take a few moments of quiet as we become aware of God's presence.*

We sit here, Lord, very aware of your presence.

We are thankful that we can draw aside from the hustle and bustle of our everyday lives and take time to listen to the gentle movement of the Holy Spirit, within us and around us.

*Today we think about the health-care and social-care systems in this country, topics that have been much in the news in recent weeks and months.*

*In 1948, the very same year that the NHS came into being, The World Health Organisation defined health as "a state of complete physical, mental and spiritual wellbeing, and not merely the absence of disease or infirmity.*

#### **Matthew chapter 4, verses 23,24**

Jesus went throughout Galilee, teaching in their synagogues and proclaiming the good news of the kingdom and curing every disease and every sickness among the people. So his fame spread throughout all Syria, and they brought to him all the sick, those who were afflicted with various diseases and pains, and he cured them.

*Today we think about the many different services and specialities within the NHS. We remember too the social-care system, for adults and children, designed to provide help with day-to-day living that is outside the scope of the NHS.*

Loving God, you hold all peoples within your loving care: no colour, race or gender curbs your graciousness; time does not weary your love; there are no barriers, no boundaries to your kindness.

In Jesus you touched the sick, and bandaged the broken with love, and you healed them. We believe that your power to heal is still present, and so we pray to you now.

Lord God, as we give thanks for all those whose work sustains our health service and social-care systems and gives us all an improved quality of life, we ask that you will bless their work. Give them that special blend of compassion and professionalism as they deal with the fears and pains of others; give them the strength and courage to continue, even when the hours are long and arduous; give them the reassurance that their skills and dedication are valued, even when appearances suggest otherwise.

We remember and pray for all front-line staff, those we meet when we have an appointment with our GP or at a hospital clinic; those we see when we are admitted to a hospital ward; those who provide specialist care for the sick, the frail, the vulnerable and the disabled in their own homes; those who provide care in residential homes or respite centres.

We remember and pray for the staff in our local hospitals in Banbury and Oxford; the GP surgeries that serve our area; the many residential nursing and care homes that cater for the needs of the elderly in the local area; and the specialist units that provide support for those with disabilities.

*In a few moments of quiet we might like to think in particular of those we've encountered recently who have provided care and support for us or our loved ones.*

Our health and well-being is dependent on the work of many hands and minds, the majority of them working behind the scenes and rarely coming in direct contact with the users of the services. And yet their contribution is vital to the safe and efficient running of the system. We acknowledge that we frequently forget these unseen workers, but we remember them now with grateful thanksgiving.

Lord God, we pray for administrators and policy makers, asking that you will give wisdom to those who bear the burden and the responsibility of allocating funds and resources, that they may be used fairly and wisely.

We pray for scientists and technicians, asking that you will give creative imagination to all those seeking cures for diseases, and advancements in techniques and drugs, that their skills may be used for the benefit of all.

We pray for those whose manual labour keeps our hospitals and care systems working, remembering cleaners and cooks, plumbers and electricians, laundry and maintenance staff, and so many other vital workers we rarely see or acknowledge.

*In a few moments of quiet we might like to think in particular of the unseen workers who have been involved in our healthcare, or that of a loved one – the lab workers who process a blood test; the maintenance engineers who service the x-ray machines and scanners. The list is almost endless.*

We also pray today for all those who use our health-care and social-care services.

Lord God, we remember and pray for the ill and injured; for the frail and vulnerable who have lost their independence; for the severely disabled who have never known independence; for the terminally ill; for those troubled or tormented in mind or spirit; for those who have lost the will to live.

Be present with them all, ease their pain, heal their damage; give them hope when times are bleak and the courage to face their future, whatever it may hold; fill them with the warmth of your love and the knowledge of your peace.

*In a few moments of quiet we might like to think in particular of any we know who are users of the health- and social-care systems at the moment.*

*As we think about the health and care systems in this country, we acknowledge that improvements need to be made in many areas, particularly that of social care. However, we must also acknowledge that it's almost impossible to meet the desires and expectations of everyone. Advances in medicine and treatment have brought improvements to our health and wellbeing which, a generation or two ago, would have been counted as a blessing, but are today so often taken for granted; seen as a right rather than a privilege. As a result, agencies for health and care are overwhelmed by pleas they cannot always meet.*

Lord God, forgive us when we are unreasonable in our expectations and impatient for quick fixes; forgive us when we assume our need is greater than our neighbours; forgive us when we let our fears and anxieties translate into rudeness and aggression towards those who are doing their best under difficult circumstances.

Lord God, encourage us to be generous in our practical and financial support of all the health and care services, so that they work for the benefit of all, without discrimination.

*In a few moments of quiet we might like to think in particular of times when we might have been unjustly critical of health- and social-care workers.*

*As we come to the end of this time of prayer, we pray that when we return to the hustle and bustle of our everyday lives we will continue to seek out that peaceful space where we can feel God's presence and be inspired by his Spirit.*

*Let's close by saying the grace together*

**The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ,  
the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit,  
be with us all evermore. Amen**