



Pray for your NHS

As a 2021 gets underway, the reality that many feared is becoming evident. Covid-19 cases are rising at an alarming rate and our health services are becoming increasingly stretched and challenged. While there is much we can do to play our part as responsible citizens in response, alongside this we are issuing a call across our churches to **pray for your NHS**.

We commit to our prayers all those within our communities whose lives have been lost, whose health has been harmed or who mourn the impact of this pandemic on those they love. As we recognise this tragic reality, it further underlines the vital role played by our healthcare services and our gratitude for their endeavours as we come together to pray for the wellbeing of all who work within them.

As we do so, we recognise the vital contribution being made by keyworkers across a whole range of sectors, particularly in our schools where there has been significant disruption. We do not and should not underestimate the stress and pressure that many are now working under – we encourage our churches to find appropriate avenues through which to express appreciation and support.

Many who regularly attend and comprise our churches are working in these key professions. They share stories of immense commitment, fortitude and genuine hope, but also bear testimony to the human cost of maintaining these vital services. Many are working long hours under constantly changing circumstances and are often exposed to the threat of infection while also seeing colleagues becoming ill.

First and foremost, this requires us to live and act responsibly, to do all we can to reduce the risk and spread of infection, and to support keyworkers by recognising the pressure under which they are operating. This will disrupt all of our routines and generate stress and anxiety for everyone. Now more than ever, we need to take to heart the New Testament invitation to *“value others above yourselves, not looking to your own interests but each of you to the interests of the others.”* (Philippians 2:3-4) These words are inspired by nothing less than the example of Jesus himself.

Alongside this, we encourage our churches to intentionally and continually pray for our NHS institutions and all those who work within them. We offer this as a starting point and encourage that this is expanded to recognise and include other key workers and vital service providers over the coming days and weeks. In particular we encourage you to:

Deliberately focus on your local hospitals, G.P.'s, ambulance service and other key healthcare providers. Take time to recognise them and include prayers for them in your online services and shared bulletins.

Make contact to let these providers know that you are praying for them – A simple card or email to share your prayerful commitment can be a message of encouragement and hope.

Keep in touch with key-workers in your own congregation or contact network. This is something that everyone can do, and a quick call, voicemail or text to simply assure them of your prayers and concern can make a difference.

Maintain this commitment. Don't just make this a one-off response, but stay aware of the key developments and pressures, continue to pray and as we suggested above, broaden your prayer focus to recognise other key workers and service providers – along with those whose businesses and livelihoods are threatened by continuing lockdown. We would encourage that you particularly identify, recognise and engage with those located in your immediate neighbourhoods.

We recognise the significance of our calling to be a people of prayer, as we seek to embrace present realities as those whose faith and hope is rooted in God. Our Scriptures repeatedly remind us that our faith should be rooted in behaviours and actions that reflect its true meaning and worth. So we make no apology for repeating the call for our churches to do all they can to encourage responsible and supportive citizenship across our communities – and we do so as a people of prayer.

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