**Prayers for the anniversary of NHS: 5 July**

The National Health Service came into being on 5 July 1948. During post-war reconstruction, improving the healthcare of the nation was seen as crucial to the nation’s recovery. Beveridge, the architect of the NHS, identified "five giants” that had to be slain: want, disease, squalor, ignorance and idleness. The cataclysm of war provided the stimulus for radical reform. It was a momentous achievement and, in spite of early professional resistance to some of the proposals, it was born of a national consensus: everybody wanted the new service to work.

 The NHS was based on principles unlike anything that had gone before. It was financed almost entirely from central taxation. That the rich paid more than the poor for comparable benefits was regarded as a crucial part of the scheme. Everyone was eligible for care, even people temporarily resident or visiting the country. People could be referred to any hospital, local or more distant. Care was free at the point of use, although prescription and dental charges were subsequently introduced.

During the current pandemic, there has been immense national and local support for the NHS and its front line workers. The emergence of the Thursday ‘Clap for Carers’ was a significant experience in the lockdown. Thanksgiving binds communities together, turning ‘I’ into ‘we’. The contribution of carers and key workers who have given of themselves sacrificially needs to be honoured. Sharing stories of people and events during the crisis is likely to form the kernel of any community celebration. Unsung heroes need to be applauded

***For the NHS***

*God of healing and compassion,*

*we thank you for the establishment of the National Health Service,*

 *and for the dedication of all who work in it:*

*give skill, sympathy and resilience to all who care for the sick,*

*and your wisdom to those engaged in medical research.*

*Strengthen all in their vocation through your Spirit,*

*that through their work many will be restored to health and strength;*

 *through Jesus Christ Our Lord*

***Amen***

