***The Churches of St Mary, Cleeton St Mary; St Giles, Farlow; St John the Baptist, Middleton Scriven; Holy Trinity, Sidbury, St Michael, Silvington; and St Mary, Stottesdon***

**Our Worship Together**

**for the Fourth Sunday after Trinity**

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In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

*Welcome to our worship together for the Fourth Sunday after Trinity. Although Stottesdon Church is gradually reopening for public worship, these recorded services will continue so that all may worship God in the unity of our shared faith. Today we celebrate especially the 72nd Anniversary of the NHS.*

*Let us begin by calling to mind those times when we have not been obedient to God’s will for us, and make our confession:*

We have not always worshipped God, our creator.

Lord, have mercy.

**Lord, have mercy.**

We have not always followed Christ, our Saviour.

Christ, have mercy.

**Christ, have mercy.**

We have not always trusted in the Spirit, our guide.

Lord, have mercy.

**Lord, have mercy.**

*A Prayer for absolution:*

May the Father forgive us

by the death of his Son

and strengthen us

to live in the power of the Spirit

all our days. **Amen.**

***The Word of God***

*Today’s psalm is from Psalm 45, telling of a royal marriage – an appropriate song of celebration as weddings are once more permitted to take place:*

**Psalm 45:10-17**

10 Hear, O daughter; consider and incline your ear; ♦ forget your own people and your father’s house.

11 So shall the king have pleasure in your beauty; ♦ he is your lord, so do him honour.

12 The people of Tyre shall bring you gifts; ♦ the richest of the people shall seek your favour.

13 The king’s daughter is all glorious within; ♦ her clothing is embroidered cloth of gold.

14 She shall be brought to the king in raiment of needlework; ♦ after her the virgins that are her

companions.

15 With joy and gladness shall they be brought ♦ and enter into the palace of the king.

16 ‘Instead of your fathers you shall have sons, ♦ whom you shall make princes over all the land.

17 ‘I will make your name to be remembered through all generations; ♦ therefore shall the peoples praise you for ever and ever.’

Glory to the Father and to the Son and to the Holy Spirit ♦ as it was in the beginning is now and shall be forever. Amen.

*The Bible reading, from chapter 11 of Matthew’s gospel, is addressed to the crowds who came put to hear him as he carried out a preaching tour of the cities around Galilee:*

**Matthew 11:16-19, 25-end**

**16**‘But to what will I compare this generation? It is like children sitting in the market-places and calling to one another,

**17**“We played the flute for you, and you did not dance;
    we wailed, and you did not mourn.”

**18**For John came neither eating nor drinking, and they say, “He has a demon”; **19**the Son of Man came eating and drinking, and they say, “Look, a glutton and a drunkard, a friend of tax-collectors and sinners!” Yet wisdom is vindicated by her deeds.’[[h](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Matthew+11&version=NRSVA#fen-NRSVA-23479h)]

**25**At that time Jesus said, ‘I thank[[i](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Matthew+11&version=NRSVA" \l "fen-NRSVA-23485i" \o "See footnote i)] you, Father, Lord of heaven and earth, because you have hidden these things from the wise and the intelligent and have revealed them to infants; **26**yes, Father, for such was your gracious will.[[j](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Matthew+11&version=NRSVA#fen-NRSVA-23486j)] **27**All things have been handed over to me by my Father; and no one knows the Son except the Father, and no one knows the Father except the Son and anyone to whom the Son chooses to reveal him.

**28**‘Come to me, all you that are weary and are carrying heavy burdens, and I will give you rest. **29**Take my yoke upon you, and learn from me; for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. **30**For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light.’

*For the Word of the Lord, thanks be to God.*

*Reflection on 72 years of the NHS:*

*‘For John came neither eating nor drinking, and they say, “He has a demon”;**the Son of Man came eating and drinking, and they say, “Look, a glutton and a drunkard…!” Yet wisdom is vindicated by her deeds.’*

This thought from Jesus captures a very human reaction. I’ve noticed more and more through this pandemic that our government can’t do a thing right. If they act quickly, they’re accused of knee-jerk, ill-considered action. If they wait for a situation to develop to find the right response, they’re accused of unnecessary delay. This is the privilege of the media, of course: to be wise after the event without having any responsibility or accountability.

But it’s true of how we all see so many things, if we’re honest. And that includes the NHS. We grumble about waiting lists and shortage of beds and so on – but, when a crisis like this one crops up, we find out just how blest we are in our health service and its staff.

The National Health Service was set up by Nye Bevan, as Minister for Health in Attlee’s post-war government, and it came into being on July 5th, 1948 – seventy-two years ago this Sunday. There are, quite rightly, celebrations planned for the service and its workers to mark the occasion. Because in the last weeks we have been shown how incredibly lucky we are to be looked after by dedicated and hard-working health carers.

The concept of the NHS actually has longer roots than 72 years. Discussed for decades before the war, it was Churchill’s national government that made the initial plans and laid the foundations for what has become known as the welfare state. So the beginnings of the NHS come from all the parties across the political spectrum; and, although some charges have had to be introduced for opticians, dentists and prescriptions, the essential principle remains the same: that health care for everybody in this country – poor, rich, male, female, of any culture or ethnicity – should be free at the point of delivery.

This concept contains two essential Christian truths: the first is the echo of St Paul’s letter to the Galatians, when he said that all of us are one in Christ Jesus.

The other references Christ Jesus himself, much of whose ministry was of healing. He was equally at home bringing healing to lepers, who were the outcast; to the poor in the form of a blind beggar; and to the rich when he raised the daughter of Jairus, who was the ruler of the local synagogue. And he didn’t just minister to Jews, but to a centurion’s servant, a Canaanite woman and a Samaritan leper – and many others.

So as we celebrate this particular anniversary we’re all united in appreciation for the health service and its workers, who are in the front line in the pandemic. What we must do to show proper appreciation is to look after them, by looking after ourselves and our neighbours: keeping up the precautions with care as lockdown begins to ease. And also, to make sure that, once the pandemic becomes just a memory, we don’t forget our health workers.

For they are truly performing a Christlike task and they echo Jesus words of invitation: ‘Come to me, all you that are weary and are carrying heavy burdens, and I will give you rest.’

May the Lord bless term and keep them, and strengthen us to take care of them. Amen.

*Now, in the Affirmation of Faith, let us share together the historic beliefs of the Church handed down to us through all the years and shared across all denominations of the Church. [The metrical version is again given at the end for those who prefer to sing it.]*

   **We believe in God the Father,**

**from whom every family**

**in heaven and on earth is named.**

**We believe in God the Son,**

**who lives in our hearts through faith,**

**and fills us with his love.**

**We believe in God the Holy Spirit,**

**who strengthens us**

**with power from on high.**

**We believe in one God;**

**Father, Son and Holy Spirit.**

**Amen.**

*Wherever we are today, we come together in the Spirit as the body of Christ to join together in our prayers, using these words or your own:*

Father, we give thanks today for the Health Service and its workers, who serve and care for us with such diligence and in the face of risk to themselves: we pray for those who serve as doctors, surgeons, nurses, responders and administrators, as they follow in the steps of Jesus the healer. As we pray for them, we pray too for those in their charge, who are sick in body, mind or spirit, that you may support them with your love through their pain, fear and uncertainty until they reach a place of healing and tranquillity.

In a few moments of quiet, let us hold before God all those on our hearts in any kind of need and thank Him too for those who are being good neighbours to us.

Lord, in your mercy,

**Hear our prayer.**

*We share the Covid-19 Prayer for all those suffering in any way from the virus:*

Keep us, good Lord, under the shadow of your mercy. Sustain and support the anxious, be with those who care for the sick, and lift up all who are brought low; that we may find comfort knowing that nothing can separate us from your love in Christ Jesus our Lord. Amen.

*The Collect for the Fourth Sunday after Trinity:*

O God, the protector of all who trust in you, without whom nothing is strong, nothing is holy: increase and multiply upon us your mercy; that with you as our ruler and guide we may so pass through things temporal that we lose not our hold on things eternal; grant this, heavenly Father, for our Lord Jesus Christ’s sake, who is alive and reigns with you, in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. Amen.

*We finish with the daily prayer that Jesus taught his friends as we say The Lord’s Prayer:*

Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name; thy kingdom come; thy will be done; on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread. And forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass against us. And lead us not into temptation; but deliver us from evil. For thine is the kingdom, the power, and the glory for ever and ever. Amen.

*We share the peace across our churches, our communities, our world:*

We are all one in Christ Jesus. We belong to him through faith, heirs of the promise of the Spirit of peace. May the peace of the Lord be with us all.

*We finish our worship by blessing each other in the words of the Grace:*

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

*Here is this week’s hymn suggestion – or you can choose a favourite one of your own. These words were written by Charles Wesley, and the music by Samuel Sebastian Wesley, his grandson.*

1. O Thou who camest from above,
the pure celestial fire to impart
kindle a flame of sacred love
upon the mean altar of my heart.

2. There let it for thy glory burn
with inextinguishable blaze,
and trembling to its source return,
in humble prayer and fervent praise.

3. Jesus, confirm my heart's desire
to work and speak and think for thee;
still let me guard the holy fire,
and still stir up thy gift in me.

4. Ready for all thy perfect will,
my acts of faith and love repeat,
till death thy endless mercies seal,
and make my sacrifice complete.

The Creed: *‘Hyfrydol’* (‘Alleluia! Sing to Jesus!’)

We believe in God the Father,

God almighty, by whose plan

earth and heaven sprang to being,

all created things began.

We believe in Christ the Saviour,

Son of God in human frame,

virgin-born, the child of Mary

upon whom the Spirit came.

Christ, who on the cross forsaken,

like a lamb to slaughter led,

suffered under Pontius Pilate,

he descended to the dead.

We believe in Jesus risen,

heaven’s king to rule and reign,

to the Father’s side ascended

till as judge he comes again.

We believe in God the Spirit;

in one Church, below, above:

saints of God in one communion,

one in holiness and love.

So by faith, our sins forgiven,

Christ our Saviour, Lord and friend,

we shall rise with him in glory

to the life that knows no end.