

Session I

Health

*Because you have made the Lord your refuge,
the Most High your dwelling-place, no evil shall befall you,
no scourge come near your tent. (Psalm 91.9-10)*

Worship

Responses

Make way for the one who comes in the name of the Lord!

One who comes with healing in his wings!

What does the Lord require of us?

To do justice, and to love kindness, and to walk humbly with our God.

Be strong and bold; have no fear or dread,

because it is the Lord your God who goes with you; God will not fail you or forsake you.

What does the Lord require of us?

To do justice, and to love kindness, and to walk humbly with our God.

Prayer of Confession

When we are tempted to look for short cuts and quick fixes

Rather than follow the way of the cross:

Forgive us and heal us.

When we are tempted by the spectacular and empty promises
of systems that leave millions hungry and poor:

Forgive us and heal us.

When we are tempted to seek our own glory and are distracted by the love of power
rather than seeking the lost and understanding the power of love:

Forgive us and heal us.

Silence

Christ resisted temptations beyond our understanding
and came into the world to bring healing and forgiveness.

Hear then, his words of grace:

Your sins are forgiven.

Amen. Thanks be to God

Prayer:

Gracious God,

Creator of all,

We remember today the ministry of healing of your Son, Jesus Christ.

We give thanks for all those involved in healthcare and in caring for others
and pray that our church will be a healing space within our community.

In the name of Christ.

Amen.

Scripture reading

Luke 5: 17-26

Reflect:

Can you remember a time when someone you care for was unwell? What were the feelings you experienced at that time? If you have been unwell yourself and have since regained your health, what was challenging and encouraging at that time?

Some Thoughts and Background

The lectionary Gospel for the first Sunday in Lent is the account of Jesus' time in the wilderness and the temptations he faces as he prepares for his ministry. He resists all the calls to offer a spectacular display of the divine power within him, refusing to go for the 'quick fix' or the media friendly sound bite, let alone to rule the nations as a despot, whose power of love would be warped into a love of power. Yet the gospels are full of accounts of miraculous healings offered by Jesus and his disciples – thirteen such accounts in Luke alone. We might be forgiven for thinking that Jesus succumbed to the temptation for the spectacular after all.

The temptations are all about drawing attention to himself, the stories of healing however are much more about Jesus drawing attention to the Creator who longs for creation to be restored and for justice to be done. In compassion, Jesus restores health and wholeness to those who are suffering and, as promised in the scriptures of old, shows himself to be the promised king who would be known by signs of healing. The healings may seem miraculous, especially in the light of modern medicine, yet they are signs of the coming of the new Kingdom of God in which there will be no suffering (Revelation 21,4). In his book, *The Way of Jesus Christ* (London: SCM, 1990) Jürgen Moltmann states "Jesus' healings are not supernatural miracles in a natural world. They are the only truly 'natural' thing in a world that is unnatural, demonized, and wounded."

In our text about the healing of the man who was lowered through the roof by his friends, we see the community nature of healing – dependence and interdependence are features of human living and society is weak and broken if we only pay attention to our own needs. Healing continues today and continues in community. The writer of this reflection has recently needed healthcare and has been contacted, seen and cared for by family members, friends, her GP, two consultants, a vast number of doctors, nurses, receptionists, car park attendants, cleaners, colleagues and kind strangers.

God desires that creation be restored and that all be nurtured and cared for in the community of the created, who are loved and valued. As the body of Christ, the church has a special role to play in bringing about healing and wholeness and in recognising

London Health Stats

London encompasses one of the biggest health regions in England, both in spend and number of people served. (The NHS in London has an annual budget of £15.1 billion for 2013/14). It is also the most diverse. These factors combine to present some unique challenges to providing health services

London has 15 NHS trusts, which includes the London Ambulance Service, 12 Foundation Trusts, three Mental Health NHS Trusts and seven Mental Health Foundation Trusts

Levels of underage pregnancy have fallen in London, from 10 per 1,000 girls aged 13-15 in 2001-2003 to 8 in 2008-2010. The gap with the rest of the country has also closed - the London figure is now very close to the national average

London has among the highest rates of tuberculosis in England and an increasing proportion of cases are found among people born outside the UK. London accounts for over 40% of new tuberculosis cases in England and the new case rate in some boroughs is over six times higher than the national average.

According to the UK's network of 12 Public Health Observatories – which compile health data for the NHS on a yearly basis – Tower Hamlets, Newham and Barking and Dagenham scored the lowest compared to the Strategic Health Authority average, while Richmond upon Thames, Kingston upon Thames and Kensington and Chelsea scored the highest

More than 40 per cent of Londoners are predicted to be obese by 2035, which will increase the risk of diabetes, stroke, heart disease, cancer and infertility

Life expectancy varies considerably across London. Travelling east from Westminster to Canning Town for example, each stop on the Jubilee line correlates to approximately one year's reduction in life expectancy

In terms of infant mortality, Kingston upon Thames had only 2.36 deaths per 1,000 live births in 2007-09, while Southwark had 6.87

The one health indicator that stands out for its deterioration is childhood obesity. The proportion of children in London who were obese at age 10 to 11 is now 23%, higher than the English average and higher than five years ago

Overall, London's morbidity and mortality rates are comparable to the English average with better life expectancy compared to seven other large English cities

The 5 priority areas for health in London are:~ Childhood obesity, Immunisation coverage, Mental Health, Sexual health, Tuberculosis

Discuss:

- Consider the characters in our Gospel story – the paralysed man, his friends, the crowd, Jesus and the disciples. What do you imagine their thoughts and feelings would be in response to the events which took place?
- In what ways might physical and mental health be affected by our spiritual well-being?
- How is your own church community involved in healthcare or the well-being of people in your neighbourhood?
- Is there a health related project nearby that you might be able to volunteer with or donate to – as individual Christians or as a Church?
- What changes have you seen in publicly provided healthcare in your area in recent years?
- Do you think the church has a role in lobbying councils and government for better healthcare or to protect local health services?

And finally.....

What specific stories, experiences or points relating to healthcare would you like to bring to the attention of the Mayoral candidates?

Please collect your stories and send to : communications@methodistlondon.org.uk