

Friends in the Wey Valley Circuit,

This week marks two important “anniversaries”, at least from my point of view. The first is the 4th of July, Independence Day in my native United States. Although my family and I are greatly in love with our adopted country, I have to admit that there’s still something about July 4th that stirs something within me. Maybe it’s the fight against tyranny (at least from the Colonists point of view). Maybe it’s about the little guy standing up to the giant. I think, though, that it’s probably the ideals that were proclaimed in our Declaration of Independence, and our Constitution. Ideals which, while certainly not lived up to, were inspiring in their belief that “all men are created equal”, that all had rights of “life, liberty, and pursuit of happiness.”

As I said, though, those ideals were, tragically, rarely implemented. Compromises from the very beginning saw the sin of slavery set into the very foundation of the new nation. It quickly descended into a Gilded Age of “haves” and “have nots” as the inequality gap between rich and poor grew greater and greater. We were spared the ravages of war that Europe experienced in the early 20th century, but, at the same time, I think that sparing had an unintended consequence in the United States.

Which leads me to the second anniversary I want to mark: that of the 75th “birthday” of your country’s National Health Service on 5th July. While I don’t claim to know nearly as much about its history as you will, I don’t think it’s a coincidence that it came out of the ashes of the World War II. In fact, a quick internet search shows those post-war years saw the establishment of many of Europe’s universal health care systems. I think a continent seeing how fragile life could be was a catalyst for this wave of care. The United States, almost completely spared civilian casualties and destruction, was able to turn its head away with less guilt.

I think that, during these two anniversaries, we can admit that both the United States and the NHS have both seen better days. But I don’t think that either should be given up on. In fact, I think both should be reformed, with an eye toward living up to their original ideals. It won’t be easy, but I think it can be done.

In closing, I’d like to share a prayer that was written Althea Hayton from Norfolk and Norwich University Hospitals Chaplaincy:

*Heavenly Father,
whose blessed Son came not to be served but to serve:
bless all who, following in his steps,
give themselves to the service of others;
that with wisdom, patience, and courage,
they may minister in his name to the suffering and the needy;
for the love of him who laid down his life for us,
your Son our Saviour Jesus Christ,
who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit,*

one God, for ever and ever.

*Lord Jesus, who healed the sick and gave them new life,
be with all carers and health professionals,
as they act as agents of your healing touch.
In desperate times, keep them strong yet loving;
and when their work is done,
be with them in their weariness and in their tears.
Amen.*

Resources / Good News

NHS Birthday 2023

To read more about the 75th Birthday of the NHS, there's a wealth of information at [NHS Birthday](#), including news and events, together with interesting and inspiring staff stories.

World Chocolate Day!

World Chocolate Day, sometimes referred to as International Chocolate Day, or just Chocolate Day, is an annual celebration of chocolate, occurring globally on 7 July, which some suggest to be the anniversary of the introduction of chocolate to Europe in 1550. The observance of World Chocolate Day dates back to 2009. So, why not celebrate the birthday of the NHS with a big slice of delicious chocolate cake. Enjoy!