



Universal

Most of us will need some kind of care and support at some point in our lives. Longer lives and medical advances mean that social care has become a universal need, no longer confined to a minority of people who too often have been marginalised and invisible. Providing care and support, and paying for it, should involve a shared responsibility across society.

We are created in the image of God (Genesis 1:27), each of us unique but equal in worth before God. This amazing grace and acceptance of who we are, needs to be reflected in how we see and care for one another as a society.

Fair

The lack of care and support when we need it is an injustice. Our collective failure to act to provide care and support is a sin.

The mission of the church is to carry on the work of Christ Jesus to ‘release the oppressed’ (Isaiah 61:1-2 and Luke 4:18). He identified with the marginalised in society, challenged the authorities, and turned the rules and norms of the day on their head.

This means paying heed to the voices that are seldom heard and taking action to create a system of care that is fair and provides equitable access.

Loving kindness

Love is at the heart of care. It is why we care. To care for and to care about others is to live out Jesus’ commandment to “love one another as I have loved you” (John 13:34). This love is described in 1 Corinthians 13 and expresses itself in gentleness and kindness, reflecting the nature of God. How we care for one another needs to reflect this love. But to speak of ‘love’ can be a loose concept; the Christian approach to ‘love’ is rooted deeply in the Jewish idea of ‘loving kindness’, or hesed. It is about an attitude that is oriented towards the good and flourishing of the other. It is a primarily relational concept. It is not simply used as a one-off act of kindness.

Loving kindness is therefore not simply a choice but an obligation to act with justice and kindness towards others over time.

Despite very challenging circumstances, the vast majority of carers both paid and unpaid want to provide good care. Loving kindness is part of the intrinsic motivation that causes people to choose care despite low pay and under-recognition. Loving kindness is a call to wider society to be organised for the long-term flourishing of every person.

Trust

Trust needs to be at the heart of the relationship between carers and cared for. We each know what matters to us and therefore know best what we need, even if we cannot always express it. This means being given power to make our own decisions and deciding what risks we want to take as far as we are able. It also means listening to those who know us best: carers, relatives and independent advocates. We have heard too many examples where individuals had not been trusted, for example, in how they wanted to use their direct payments or in their attitude to risk.

Inclusion

In Christ there are no divisions: “neither slave nor free, nor is there male and female” to this we could add “neither able-bodied or disabled, neither neurodiverse nor neurotypical, nor is there old and young” (Galatians 3:28 or Colossians 3:11). Yet many disabled and older people face discrimination, both generally and in how they experience care and can feel excluded from churches and communities, from groups or from our workplaces. Disability remains stigmatised in our society. We should challenge ableism and ageism where we see and hear it.

Mutuality

Promoting independence is rightly held up as a positive goal of care and support. Yet the best examples of care and support are based on interdependence and reciprocity – the idea that we each give and receive in different ways at different times. Regardless of our age or needs, we value relationships and belonging to community. We are social beings. The early church provides a model of living in community, of mutuality, and interdependence, where everyone has a part to play (1 Corinthians 12:12).

Empathy

Compassion is expressed in helping others in greater need than us. Care flows out of compassion but it can be paternalistic. Doing to others what we think they need, rather than starting with the person, and asking what matters to them.

In the true meaning of ‘compassion’, we get alongside others in their situation, stand or sit shoulder to shoulder, and act as allies. Doing with not for others. This requires care to be based on empathy not sympathy. It requires a deep knowledge and understanding of the other, their hopes, their aspirations, the things they enjoy and the gifts they bring.

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