

‘Our Hands in the Time of Corona’

16 August – 20 October 2020



Throughout history, the arts have been used both personally and collectively as a way of documenting, exploring and understanding extraordinary events that impact on our lives. As we have found ourselves in a different world, challenged to make sense of what is happening, the arts, in the broadest sense, can provide an opportunity to reflect.

Nurse practitioner and writer Allison Day is collaborating with Art for Life, the Trust’s art and design team and the Wellbeing Team on a project called ‘Our Hands in the Time of Corona’ (inspired by ‘Love in the Time of Cholera’ by Gabriel Garcia Marquez).

Our hands have never been needed more. Whether being used to gently turn and prone a patient in ICU, forensically clean a clinical environment or deliver a clap of gratitude for frontline workers our hands are, more than ever, a universal symbol of unity, connectedness and care. Whilst some of their purpose is, through necessity, being denied during the global coronavirus pandemic, we are re-learning to use them to express our love and togetherness – a wave given, a kiss blown, a thumbs up now joined by fresh ways to touch without touching those we care about most, be it through a window, across cyberspace or via a myriad of wonderfully creative gestures. We are also using our hands in ways that may be new to us – baking a cake, growing plants from seed, playing an instrument. A new language of care – and self-care – grows amongst us.

Whilst visiting Hebden Bridge in West Yorkshire in 2019, Allison came across Hannah Nunn’s beautiful little book ‘Tiny Treasures’ which she gave to her husband for Christmas. This book inspired Allison to write a poem in her husband’s Christmas card. What began as a very personal exchange between her husband and herself, has in the last few weeks and months, evolved into a reworking of her poem for wider appeal. A more inclusive poem that is uplifting and hopeful for staff during the coronavirus pandemic.

‘Walk newly together,
Be unlearned in the wild
And let the tiny treasures teach us.’

Using Allison’s poem as a jumping off point, we have asked all staff at the Trust what ‘tiny treasure’ they have discovered during lockdown. – a passion that was reacquainted with, an activity that is new or something wonderful they have noticed for the first time.

This exhibition is of hands containing the ‘tiny treasures’ that our staff have submitted, a celebration of our common humanity and in hopeful prospect of holding them again in person when the time is right.

Our ultimate vision is to develop this project, alongside a national project we are discussing with other Trusts' arts team, and to create a permanent physical legacy, somewhere on some of the Trust's sites, to what has been and continues to be a true test of our resilience, both as individuals and as an incredible team of people – something that encourages us to reflect on our common experience and remember what is most important to us.

For the beginning of this 'journey of inspiration' – thank you Hannah! www.hannahunn.co.uk

www.somersetft.nhs.uk/art-for-life

