

# Waiting room

by James Henderson

**T**hank you for your patience. You are number 18 waiting to speak to a receptionist. The current wait time is 20 minutes, 15 seconds.”

Don't you hate that kind of message? You need to see a doctor, you've left calling the surgery to the very last moment, and, now, you're left hanging on at the end of the phone only to find out, when you do eventually get through, that there are no appointments left for the day. And, so, you decide to try again the next morning.

It's frustrating to wait.

We've all heard alarming stories about people waiting to be seen at a hospital A&E. The pensioner dumped for hours on a gurney in a lonely corridor, the ambulance arriving six

hours after the emergency call was made, the child neglected when she needed emergency treatment. They may be exceptions, but they grab our attention, and we don't want it to happen to us or to our nearest and dearest.

I read a story once about a man who was beaten up by thieves and left by the side of the road to die. It's the story that was the inspiration behind the Good Samaritan movement, and it was told by Jesus Christ. Two people who had the power to help him saw him lying there, and they made a decision to walk on by and do nothing, not even to call for help later. Perhaps they were afraid for their own safety—had the robbers really gone? Or, were they prejudiced in some way? Or just too selfish to get involved? What happened next was unexpected. A foreigner, a transient worker perhaps, an immigrant if you wish,

was passing by, saw the wounded man, and bandaged him up. The stranger then transported him to a hotel for rest and recuperation, and he even paid the bill! Quite a story. The victim, though, had to wait unattended, probably for hours, until someone chose to help him.

It makes you think, doesn't it? At least it does me. Are there people I could help, but don't? I'm too distracted. I don't care enough. Life is too busy anyway. Let someone else do it. It may just be a little thing like a get-well card, flowers to say you care, an encouraging telephone call, a smile, an anonymous gift, but I can't be bothered. Or something bigger, but will I make the effort?

Let's grab the chance to help others when we can. Perhaps there's a little room for improvement.

What are you waiting for?

