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Key workers from across the Diocese of York were welcomed to a reception in the grounds of Bishopthorpe Palace today. Archbishop Stephen Cottrell and his wife Rebecca invited people who were recognised by work colleagues, neighbours and local churches as “going the extra mile” during the pandemic.

Cheryl Bothamley, a domestic assistant who cleans at Castle Hill hospital, Cottingham, said: “I was pleased to be able to do my bit during the pandemic. It was very special to be part of a team caring for people and keeping our hospital clean so our nurses and doctors could do their job. This is a great thank you but this is not just for me, it’s for all my colleagues.”

Ann Watson, coordinator for the Foodbank at St Barnabas Church Middlesbrough and group leader for Prison fellowship, said: “Helping and supporting families in Linthorpe and Ayresome, and also at HMP Holme House is a real privilege. I am so grateful to the people of St Barnabas Church and in our community for providing food and gifts throughout the pandemic. I also want to thank the faithful teams who have supported me – I couldn’t have done it without them. Many families and hundreds of children were very thankful for the support they received. For me this is putting my Christian faith into action by loving my neighbour.”

Anna Diget works for York Neighbours and the team did some outstanding work to try and make sure that help was available for older people in York. Anna said, “I remember the early months in particular were incredible as so many in York generously offered their time and help. It was wonderful to see the generosity of people in the city. It was also tiring and the needs were potentially overwhelming, but the team did manage to get a system in place that meant that those needing help did get support. In amongst the heartbreak, as we saw the struggles of older people, their gratitude and the kindness of volunteers kept us going and still keep us going today.”

Archbishop Stephen Cottrell said: “I am humbled to hold this thank you event for frontline workers in the grounds of Bishopthorpe Palace. It was amazing to talk to so many people whose dedication and work undertaken during the pandemic helped to relieve so much suffering. I was very keen to invite those on the ground, those working in the NHS, care workers, emergency services; those who have helped keep our supermarkets open, driven the buses and delivered the post; staffed the food banks, taught children in school, volunteered at Covid vaccination centres, or those who have simply been incredible neighbours. Thank you so much.”

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